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LITERARY LIVES

EDITED BY
W. ROBERTSON NICOLL

SIR WALTER SCOTT



From the Painting by John Graham Gilbert

SIR WALTER SCOTT

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BY ANDREW LANG



LITERARY LIVES

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To

The Hon. Mrs. Maxwell Scott.

Preface

IF all reading mankind had time to read Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, a brief volume on Sir Walter would be a thing without excuse. I am informed, however, by the Editor of this Series that the appreciation of Time, in our age, does not permit Lockhart to be universally read. I have therefore tried to compress as much as I may of the essence of Lockhart's great book into small space, with a few additions from other sources. In such efforts one compiler will present matter for which another cannot find room. The volume differs from its excellent predecessors by the late Mr. Hutton, and by Mr. Saintsbury, in being the work of one who comes from Sir Walter's own countryside, and has worked over much of his historical ground, and over most of the MS. materials which were handled by Lockhart.

The late regretted Mr. David Carnegie, after twice crossing the Australian desert, summed up his results in the saying that no explorer need go thither again. The Abbotsford MSS. are not a desert, but Lockhart has omitted nothing in them which is of value, nothing which bore essentially on his theme. No explorer need go thither again, save to confirm his appreciation of the merits of Lockhart's work. All other books on Scott are but its satellites, and their glow, be it brighter or fainter, is a borrowed radiance.

St. Andrews,
December 25, 1905.

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CHAPTER I

Ancestry, Childhood, Youth, First Love, Marriage

THE visitor to Abbotsford, looking up at the ceiling of the hall, beholds, in the painted shields, the heraldic record of the "heredity" of Sir Walter Scott. In his time the doctrine of heredity had not won its way into the realm of popular science, but no man was more interested in pedigree than the Laird. His ancestors were part of himself, though he was *not* descended from a "Duke of Buccleuch of the fourteenth century," as the *Dictionary of National Biography* declares, with English innocence. Three of the shields are occupied by white cloudlets on a blue ground; the arms of certain of the Rutherford ancestors, cadets of Hunthill, could not be traced. For the rest, if we are among those who believe that genius comes from the

Celtic race alone, we learn with glee that the poet was not without his share of Celtic blood. He descended, on the female side, from the Macdougals of Makerston, and the Macdougals are perhaps the oldest family in Scotland, are certainly among the four or five oldest families. But they stood for the English cause against Bruce, a sorrow, no doubt, to their famous descendant. The wife, again, of Scott's great grandfather, "Beardie" the Jacobite, was a Miss Campbell of Silvercraigs, counting cousins with the Campbells, (who are at least as much Douglases as Campbells) of Blythswood. Finally, the name of Scott, I presume, was originally borne by some infinitely remote forefather, who was called "The Scot" because he was Irish by birth though his family was settled, first in Lanarkshire, later among the Cymri and English of Ettrickdale and Teviotdale. So much for the Celtic side of Sir Walter.

On the other hand, the Rutherfords—his mother was a Rutherford—are probably sprung from the Anglo-Norman *noblesse* who came into Scotland with David I, and obtained the lands

whence they derive their name. They are an older family, on the Border, than the Scotts, who are not on record in Rankilburn before 1296. One of them (from whose loins also comes the present genealogist) frequently signs (or at all events seals,) the charters of David I about 1140. The Swintons, famous in our early wars, and the Haliburtons, cadets of Dirleton, have a similar origin, so that in Scott met the blood of Highlands and Lowlands, Celtic, Teutonic, and Norman. "There are few in Scotland," says Lockhart, "under the titled nobility, who could trace their blood to so many stocks of historical distinction." All Scottish men have a share in Sir Walter. The people of Scotland, "gentle" or "simple," have ever set store on such ancestral connexions, and they certainly were a source of great pleasure to Scott.

His mind was, in the first place, historical; rooted in and turning towards the past, as the only explanation of the present. Before he could read with ease, say at the age of four or five, he pored over Scott of Satchells' rhyming *True History of several Honourable Families of the Right Honourable Name of Scot.* "I mind

spelling these lines," he said, when Constable gave him a copy of the book, in 1818. Indeed, he was always "spelling" the legends and history of his race, while he was making it famous by his pen, since accident forbade him to make it glorious by his sword. One legend of the Scotts of Harden, the most celebrated of all, is, I think, a *Märchen*, or popular tale, the story of Muckle Mou'd Meg and her forced marriage with young Harden. Suppose the unlikely case that William Scott, younger, of Harden, did undertake a long expedition to seize the cattle of Murray of Elibank, on the upper Tweed. I deem this most improbable, in the reign of James VI, when he was seated on the English throne. But suppose it occurred, who can believe that Elibank would dare to threaten young Harden with hanging on the Elibank doom tree? Even if Scots law would have borne him out, Elibank dared not face the feud of the strongest name on the Border. Thus it is not to be credited that young Harden chose "Muckle Mou'd Meg," Elibank's daughter, as an alternative to the gallows. Moreover, the legend, I

am informed, recurs in a province of Germany. If so, the tale may be much older than the Harden-Elibank marriage. The contract of that marriage is extant, and is not executed "on the parchment of a drum," as Lockhart romantically avers. Scott, better than most men, must have known how more than doubtsome is the old legend.

He let no family tradition drop: rather, he gave a sword and a cocked hat, in his own phrase, to each story. The ballad of *Kinmont Willie*, the tale of the most daring and bloodless of romantic exploits, certainly owes much to him, and he "brought out with a wet finger" (in Randolph's phrase), all the dim exploits and fading legends of Tweed, Ettrick, Ail, Yarrow, and Teviot; streams, Dr. John Brown says, "*fabulosi* as ever was Hydaspes."

The son of a Writer to the Signet, Scott was grandson of a speculative Border yeoman, who laid out the entire sum necessary for stocking his farm on one mare, and sold her at a double advantage. Possibly Scott may have inherited the sanguine disposition of this adventurer. He was born to make all the world familiar

with the life and history of an ancient kingdom, that, as a kingdom, had ceased to be, and with adventures rapidly winning their way to oblivion.

Just when Scotland, seventy years after she was "no longer Scotland" (according to Lockhart of Carnwath), merged into England, Nature sent Burns to make Scottish peasant life immortal, and Scott to give immortality to chivalrous Scottish romance. There are traces of love of history and traces of intellectual ability in Scott's nearest kin. His lawyer father, born in 1729, was naturally more devoted to "analysing abstruse feudal doctrines," and to studying "Knox's and Spottiswoode's folios" of the history of Kirk and State, than to the ordinary business of his calling. Scott's maternal uncle, Dr. Rutherford, "was one of the best chemists in Europe"—we have Sir Walter's word for it. Scott's mother was not only fond of the best literature, but had a memory for points of history and genealogy almost as good as his own. "She connected a long period of time with the present generation." Scott wrote when she died (1819),

" for she remembered, and had often spoken with a person who perfectly recollected the battle of Dunbar. . . ." She knew all about the etiquette of the Covenanting conventicles under the Restoration, when the lairds' wives, little to the comfort of their lords, sat on their saddles on the ground, listening to preachers like Walsh or Cameron.

Fortunate indeed was Scott in his mother, who did not spoil him, though he must have been her favourite child. His eldest brother who attained maturity not only fought under the glorious Rodney, but " had a strong talent for literature," and composed admirable verses. His brother Thomas was credited by Sir Walter with considerable genius, and was put forward by popular rumour as the author of the *Waverley* novels. His only surviving sister, Anne (died 1801), " lived in an ideal world, which she had framed to herself by the force of imagination." Scott himself was well aware of his own tendency " to live in fantasy," in the kingdom of dreams, and in the end he discovered that in the kingdom of dreams he had actually been living, as regards his own affairs, despite his

strong practical sense, and "the thread of the attorney" in his nature. His genius, in short, was the flower and consummation of qualities existing in his family; while it was associated, though we may presume not causally, with such maladies as are current amongst families in general. There would be genius abundantly, if genius were merely a "sport" of disease.

At Abbotsford, in Sir Walter's desk, are six bright locks of the hair of six brothers and sisters of his, who were born and died between 1759 and 1766, an Anne, a Jean, and a Walter, two Roberts, and a John. These early deaths were suspected to be due to the air of the old house in College Wynd, built on the site of Kirk o' Field, where Darnley was murdered, perhaps on the site of the churchyard. But it was not till after the birth of the second Walter (August 15, 1771) that his father flitted to the pleasant wide George's Square, beside the Meadows, and thereafter no children of the house died in childhood.

His own life-long malady was perhaps of an osseous nature. An American specialist has advanced the theory that "the peak", the

singularly tall and narrow head of Scott ("better be Peveril of the Peak than Peter of the Paunch," he said to "Lord Peter"), was due to the early closure of the sutures of the skull. The brain had to force a way upwards, not laterally! However that may be, at the age of eighteen months, after gambolling one night like a *fey* child, little Walter was seized with a teething fever, and, on the fourth day, was found to have lost the use of his right leg. The malady, never cured entirely, but always the cause of lameness, probably deprived Wellington of a gallant officer, for Scott was by nature a man of action. But Wellington had lieutenants enough, and the accident made possible the career of a poet.

"The making of him" began at once, for the child was removed to the grandpaternal farm of Sandy Knowe, beneath the crags whence the Keep of Smailholme (in *The Eve of St. John*) looks over "Tweed's fair flood, and all down Teviotdale," over the wide plain and blue hills that had seen so many battles and border frays. Here he was "first conscious of existence"—or first remembered his con-

sciousness—swathed in the skin of a newly slain sheep, and crawling along the floor after a watch dangled by his kinsman, Sir George Macdougal of Makerstoun.

> And ever, by the winter hearth,
> Old tales I heard of woe or mirth,
> Of lovers' slights, of ladies' charms,
> Of witches' spells, of warriors' arms,—
> Of patriot battles won of old
> By Wallace Wight and Bruce the Bold,—
> Of later fields of feud and fight,
> When, pouring from their Highland height,
> The Scottish clans, in headlong sway,
> Had swept the scarlet ranks away.

Sandyknowe was indeed "fit nurse for a poetic child," "a sweet tempered bairn, a darling with all about the house." A miniature of three years later shows us the tall forehead, the frank and eager air, the force and charm of the child, certainly "a comely creature," who, left alone among the hills, "clapped his hands at the lightning, and cried 'bonny, bonny' at every flash." He was "as eager to hear of the defeat of Washington, as if I had had some deep and personal cause of antipathy to him"; while he was already

under the charm of the King over the Water, Charles, lingering out his life at Florence, not answering the petition that he would raise the standard among the faithful in America. "I remember detesting the name of Cumberland with more than infant hatred," for he had heard, from an eye-witness, the story of the execution of the Highland prisoners at Carlisle (1746). He learned by heart his first ballad, a modern figment, *Hardiknute;* he shouted it through the house, and disturbed an old divine who had seen Pope, and the wits of Queen Anne's time. It was not easy to keep young Walter "at the bit," but his aunt soon taught him "to read brawly." He himself says that he "acquired the rudiments of reading" at Bath, whither he was carried between the ages of four and six.

Just afterwards, at Prestonpans, he made the acquaintance of a veteran bearing the deathless name of Dalgetty, and of a Mr. Constable, in part the original of Monkbarns, in *The Antiquary*, "the first person who told me about Falstaff and Hotspur." Returned to Edinburgh, he read Homer (in Pope's version), and

the Border Ballads, with his mother, who had "a strong turn to study poetry and works of devotion"—no poetry on Sundays, a day "which in the end did none of us any good."

We see "the making of him." Before he was six Sir Walter was "made"; he was a bold rider, a lover of nature and of the past, he was a Jacobite, and the friend of epic and ballad. In short, as Mrs. Cockburn (a Rutherford of the beautiful old house of Fairnalie-on-Tweed) remarked before he was six, "he has the most extraordinary genius of a boy I ever saw. . . . He reads like a Garrick." No doubt his mother saw and kept these things in her heart, but we do not hear that others of the family recognized a genius in a boy who was a bookworm at home, and idle at school.

He once, at this period, said a priggish thing, which Lockhart knew, but has omitted. Some one, finding him at his book asked (as people do), "Walter, why don't you play with the other boys in the Square?"

"Oh, you can't think how ignorant these boys are!"

One deeply sympathizes, but later he found

nobody from whom he could not learn something, were it but about "bend leather."

Such were, in the old French phrase of chivalry, *Les Enfances Gualtier*. Now the technical Age of Innocence was past, and, in October 1778, having seen seven summers, he went to the old Edinburgh High School, to Mr. Frazer's class. The age of entry was not, perhaps, unnaturally early.[1]

"Duxships," and gold medals, and the making of Greek Iambics were not for Walter Scott. He was, he tells us, younger than the other boys in the second class, and had made less progress than they in Latin. "This was a real disadvantage," as there was leeway to make up. He sat near the bottom of the huge string of boys, perhaps eighty, and, as he truly says, the boys used to fall into sets, "clubs and coteries," according to the benches which they occupied. There they used to sit, and play at ingenious games—*e.g.* (in my time) a match between the Caesars and the Apostles—con-

[1] My kinsman, the late Professor Sellar, went to the Edinburgh Academy at seven, and was *Dux*, as the head boy used to be called, at fourteen.

ducted on the principle of a raffle ; or a regatta of paper boats blown across the floor. The tawse (a leather strap) descended on their palms, but learning never came near them, and they moved up from class to class by seniority, not by merit.

Scott was not always on the lowest benches, but flew to the top by answering questions in "general information" (which nobody has), and fell, by a rapid *dégringolade*, when topics were afoot about which every industrious boy knew everything. He was the meteor of the form, the translator of Horace or Virgil into rhyme, "the historian of the class" (as Dr. Adam, the headmaster said), and he was "a bonny fechter." Owing to his lameness, he and his opponent used to fight sitting on opposite benches—his victories were won, as he said, *in banco*. He dared "the three kittle steps" on the narrow ledge of rock outside the wall of Edinburgh Castle ; helped to man the Cowgate in snowball riots, and took part in the "stone bickers" against the street boys, which he describes in the anecdote of Green Breeks. His private tutor had "a very strong turn to

anaticism," and in argument with him Scott adopted the side of Claverhouse and the Crown against Argyll and the Covenanters. "I took up my politics at that period as King Charles II did his religion" (King Charles is here much misunderstood), "from an idea that the Cavalier creed was the more gentlemanlike of the two."

In these controversies were the germs of *Old Mortality*. "The beastly Covenanters," wrote Scott to Southey in 1807, "hardly had any claim to be called men, unless what was founded on their walking upon their hind feet. You can hardly conceive the perfidy, cruelty, and stupidity of these people, according to the accounts they have themselves preserved." But, when he came to write history, Scott adopted another view, and, out of sheer love of fairness, was unfair to the Cavaliers. By "a nice derangement of" dates, he introduced the worst cruelties of the Cavaliers before they occurred, and did not mention at all the cause of the severities—the Cameronian declaration of war by murder.

His old tutor could have done no better for

"the good old cause," but modern popular historians do as much. Under the Headmaster, Dr. Adam, "learned, useful, simple," Scott rose to the highest form, though, like St. Augustine, and for no better reason, he refused to learn Greek. He certainly "never was a first-rate Latinist"—his quotations from Roman poets prove that fact, no less than a false quantity in his only brace of Latin elegiacs, for the tomb of his deerhound, Maida.[1]

Scott regretted his ignorance of Greek, "a loss never to be repaired, considering what that language is, and who they were who employed it in their compositions." The most Homeric of later poets knew nothing of Homer, which was to himself, certainly, an irreparable loss, for Pope and Cowper could not impart to him a shadow of what Homer would have been to him in the Greek. But great as is the delight which he missed, it is not probable that a knowledge of Greek literature would have moved Scott to imitate its order, its beauty,

[1] Edward Fitzgerald (*Omar Khâyyâm*) says that Lockhart introduced a false quantity. In fact, James Ballantyne was guilty. cf. p. 204. *infra*.

and its deep and poignant vein of reflection on human destiny.

People blame Scott because he has not the depth of Shakespeare or of Wordsworth, because Homer, a poet of war, of the sea, of the open air, is far more prone than Scott was to melancholy reflection on the mystery of human fortunes. But Scott was silent, not because he did not reflect, but because he knew the futility of human reflection. *Humana perpessi sumus* is a phrase which escapes him in his age, when he looks back on a lost and unforgotten love, on a broken life, on what might have been, and what had been. "We are men, and have endured what men are born to bear"—that is his brief philosophy. Why add words about it all? The silence of Scott better proves the depth of his thought, and the splendour of his courage, than the finest "reflections" that poets have uttered in immortal words. It is not because his thought is shallow that he never shows us the things which lie in the deep places of his mind. "Men and houses have stood long enough, if they stand till they fall with honour," says his Baron Bradwardine. "Ilios

must perish, the city of Priam of the ashen spear," says Homer—and what more is there to say, for a man who does not wear his heart on his sleeve? Knowledge of Greek poetry would not have induced Scott to write a line in the sense of the melancholy of Greek epic poetry; a noble melancholy, but he will utter none of its inspirations. On the side of precision, exquisite proportion, rich delicacy of language, "loading every reef with gold," as Keats advised Shelley to do, Scott would have learned nothing from Greece.

His genius was of another bent—

> Flow forth, flow unconstrained, my Tale!

he says, knowing himself to be an improviser, not a minutely studious artist. He knew his own path, and he followed it, holding his own art at a lowly price. No critic is more severe on him for his laxities, for his very "unpremeditated art" than he is himself. But, such as that art may be, it was what he was born to accomplish, and, had he read as much Greek as Tennyson, he would still have written as he rode

> Without stop or stay down the rocky way,

and through the wan water of the river in spate. He was obedient to his nature, and all the Greek Muses singing out of Olympus could not have altered his nature, or changed the riding lilt of *Dick o' the Cow* for more classical measures and a more chastened style.

For these reasons, as he was not, like Keats, a Greek born out of due time, but a minstrel of the Mosstroopers, we need not regret that he was ignorant of the greatest of all literatures. Of Latin, he had enough to serve his ends. He seldom cites Virgil: he appears to have preferred Lucan. He could read, at sight, such Latin as he wanted to read, which was mainly medieval. His knowledge of Italian, German, Spanish, and French was of the same handy homemade character. He picked up the tongues in the course of reading books in the tongues, books of chivalry and romance. His French, when he spoke in that language was, as one of the Court of the exiled Charles X in Holyrood said, "the French of the good Sire de Joinville."

From childhood, and all through his schoolboy days, and afterwards, he was a narrator.

A lady who knew him in early boyhood says that he had a myth for every occasion. "Even when he wanted ink to his pen he would get up some ludicrous story about sending his doggie to the mill again." We are reminded of the two Stevensons, telling each other stories about the continents and isles in the milk and porridge which they were eating. "He used also to interest us . . ." says a lady, "by telling us the *visions*, as he called them, which he had when lying alone . . . when kept from going to church on a Sunday by ill-health . . . misty and sublime sketches of the regions above which he had visited in his trance." The lady thought that he had a tendency to "superstition," but he was only giving examples of the uprisings from the "subliminal" regions which are open to genius. It was with invented stories that he amused his friends, Irving and James Ballantyne, whom he met at a school of which he was a casual pupil at Kelso. He once kept a fellow-traveller awake all night, by his narrative of the foul murder of Archbishop Sharp, told as they drove across Magus Moor, the scene of that "godly fact."

The men and women whom he met in boyhood, oddities, "characters," people his novels. Chance scraps of humour remained in the most retentive of memories, reappeared in his romances, and made it impossible for his old friends to doubt his authorship. His long country walks were directed to places of historical interest, in which he found that scarce any one else was interested, before he peopled them with the figures of his dreams.

In his thirteenth year Scott matriculated at the town's college of Edinburgh. At this time he was once in the same room with Burns, whom he enlightened as to the authorship of lines by Langhorne, written under a weak engraving of Bunbury's, a soldier dead in the snow beside his wife and dog. It is curious that the author's name, in fact, is printed under the verses. Scott remarked of Burns' eyes, that "he never saw their like in a human head." "His countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits." The late Dr. Boyd of St. Andrews (A.K.H.B.) once asked a sister of Burns which of the portraits of her brother was the best likeness? "They a'

mak' him ower like a gentleman," she replied, and no doubt she meant that they missed the massiveness of his countenance. Scott thought Burns too humble in his attitude towards young Ferguson, in whom he recognized his master; not wholly an error, and a generous error at worst. Scott also thought himself "unworthy to tie Burns' shoes," so noble was the generosity of either poet.

His fifteenth year saw Scott, already a lawyer's apprentice, in the Highlands, happy in the society of Stewart of Invernahyle, who had fought a sword and target duel with Rob Roy (at Ardsheil, I think), had been out with the Prince, and supplied the central incidents of *Waverley*. "The blawing bleezing lairds" were not much to the taste of the elder Mr. Scott, who was unconsciously sitting for his own portrait as the elder Fairford in *Redgauntlet*, a picture rich in affectionate humour. "The office," in Edinburgh, swallows up a large proportion of the schoolboys. To Mr. R. L. Stevenson, "the office" seemed a Minotaur, but Scott found in it his profit. He acquired, as a copyist, the quality of steady

prolonged writing; the faculty of sitting at it which Anthony Trollope called "rump." He once covered, without interruption, a hundred and twenty pages of folio, at threepence the page, gaining thirty shillings to spend on books or a dirk. Looking at the MSS. of his novels, down to the never-to-be-published *Knights of Malta*, written during his last voyage to Italy, we see the steady, unfaltering, speedy hand of the law writer, with scarce a correction or an erasure. After his ruin, after his breakdown in health, he once wrote the "copy" of sixty printed pages of a novel in a day. He had acquired the power of sitting at it, without which his colossal labours, in the leisure hours of a busy official life, would have been impossible. He could not have done this had he not been of Herculean strength, the strongest man in the acquaintance of the Ettrick Shepherd. "Though you may think him a poor lamiter, he's the first to begin a row, and the last to end it," said a naval officer. Like his own Corporal Raddlebanes, he once fought three men with his stick, for an hour by the Tron clock—not that of Shrewsbury.

We are apt to forget how young Scott was, at this period. He was only eighteen when he piloted a young English friend through the shoals and reefs of early misadventure. He can scarcely have been nineteen when he met *Le Manteau Vert*, Miss Stewart Belches (daughter of Sir John Stewart Belches of Invermay), the object of his first and undying love. His friends thought him cold towards the fair, but, in truth, he was shielded by a pure affection. Concerning the lady, I have heard much, from Mrs. Wilson (*née* Macleod), whose aged aunt, or great-aunt, like Scott, fell in love with the bride of William Forbes. "She was more like an angel than a woman," the old lady would say. Scott's passion endured for five years ("three years of dreaming and two of wakening," he says), inspiring him, as time went on, to severe application in his legal studies, and to his first efforts in literature.

Lockhart did not know the details of the ending of the vision. "What a romance to tell—and told I fear it will one day be," wrote Scott after his ruin. But told the romance never will or can be, except in the merest out-

line. Scott thought that he had something to complain of, as appears from his poem, *The Violet*, about "my false love," and in verses describing Fitz James' broken sleep, in *The Lady of the Lake.*

> Then, . . . from my couch may heavenly might
> Chase that worst phantom of the night—
> Again return the scenes of youth,
> Of confident undoubting truth
> * * * *
> They come, in dim procession led,
> The cold, the faithless, and the dead.
> * * * *
> Dreamed he of death, or broken vow,
> Or is it all a vision now?

Scott, according to Lady Louisa Stuart, said that he always, in later life, dreamed of his lost love before any great misfortune. In age and sickness, his *Journal* tells much of his thoughts of her, of the name he had cut in runic characters on the grass below the tower of St. Rule's at St. Andrews, the name that "still had power to stir his heart." But years went by before the vision ended—the vision of the lady of *Rokeby*, of *Redgauntlet*, and of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel;* "by many names one form."

It is because he knew passion too well that he is not a poet of passion. There is nothing in Scott like the melancholy or peevish repining of the lovers in *Locksley Hall* and in *Maud*. Only in the fugitive farewell caress of Diana Vernon, stooping from her saddle on the darkling moor before she rides into the night, do we feel the heart-throb of Walter Scott. Of love as of human life he knew too much to speak. He did not "make copy" of his deepest thoughts or of his deepest affections. I am not saying "They were pedants who could speak," or blaming those who can "unlock their hearts" with a sonnet or any other poetic key. But simply it was not Sir Walter's way; and we must take him with his limitations—honourable to the man, if unfortunate for the poet.

We see him, a splendid figure, "tall, much above the usual stature, cast in the very mould of a youthful Hercules; the head set on with singular grace, the throat and chest after the truest model of the antique, the hands delicately finished, the whole outline that of extraordinary vigour, without as yet a touch

of clumsiness." The "lamiter" "could persuade a pretty young woman to sit and talk with me, hour after hour, in a corner of a ball-room, while all the world were capering in our view."

This was the lad who shone in The Speculative Society; who roamed with Shortreed from Charlieshope to Charlieshope, dear to all the Dandie Dinmonts of Liddesdale, "sober or drunk, he was aye the gentleman." You could not wander in Liddesdale, in these days, without the risk of being "fou": though even among these "champion bowlsmen" Scott had the strongest head. "How brawlie he suited himself to every body," as to "auld Thomas of Twizzlehope," who possessed "the real lilt of *Dick o' the Cow*," and a punch bowl fatal to sobriety. The real lilt, or "a genuine old Border war horn" was worth a headache. Mr. Hutton, in his book on Scott, made his moan over the story of the arrival of a keg of brandy that interrupted religious exercise in Liddesdale. *Autres temps, autres moeurs*, and Scott, during these ballad-hunting expeditions, was not yet twenty-one. In defending the

Rev. Mr. Macnaught, before the General Assembly, on a charge of lack of sobriety, and of "toying with a sweetie wife" and singing sculdudery chants, Scott edified the General Assembly by the distinction between *ebrius* and *ebriosus*, between being drunk and being a drunkard. But the Assembly decided that Mr. Macnaught was *ebriosus*. In getting up this case Scott visited, for the only time, the country of the Picts of Galloway, and of *Guy Mannering*.

The period of the Reign of Terror, in France, found Scott taking part in anti-revolutionary "rows" in Edinburgh. Nothing hints that he, like Wordsworth, conceived a passionate affection for the Revolution. The Radicals had a plot of the good old Jacobite kind for seizing the Castle (1794), but Scott rejected such romance, and was a volunteer on the side of order. In 1795 he conceived that his love suit was prospering, as appears plainly in a letter; despite "his habitual effort to suppress, as far as words were concerned, the more tender feelings, which in no heart were deeper than in his." He translated Bürger's ballad of

Lenore (a refashioning of a *volkslied* current in modern Greece, and as *The Suffolk Tragedy*, in England), and laid "a richly bound and blazoned copy" at his lady's feet (1796). The rhymes are spirited—

> Tramp, tramp! along the land they rode,
> Splash, splash, along the sea,
> The scourge is red, the spur drops blood,
> The flashing pebbles flee!

But the lady "gave to gold, what song could never buy," as her unfriends may have said. But as her chosen lover was William Forbes, of the house of the good old Lord Pitsligo of the Forty-Five, and as Mr. (later Sir William) Forbes remained the staunchest friend of Scott, we may be certain that Green Mantle merely obeyed her heart.

"I shudder," wrote a friend, "at the violence of his most irritable and ungovernable mind." He little knew Scott, who rode from his lady's house into the hills, "eating his own heart, avoiding the paths of men," and said nothing. The fatal October of his rejection (1796) saw the publication of his first book, a slim quarto, containing translations of

Bürger's ballads. The lady of Harden, a Saxon by birth, corrected "his Scotticisms, and more especially his Scottish *rhymes*." He had become the minstrel of "the Rough Clan" of Scott, and was a friend of the Houses of Harden (his chief's) and of Buccleuch.

Scotland lost Burns in 1796, but did not yet take up Scott, whose ballads literally served "to line a box," as Tennyson says, and were delivered over to the trunk-makers. He made no moan, and, in April 1797, his heart, as he says, "was handsomely pieced." At Gilsland he met the dark-eyed Miss Charpentier, of French origin, daughter of M. Jean Charpentier (*Ecuyer du Roi*), and fell in love. I think that, in Julia Mannering, the lively dark beauty of *Guy Mannering*, we have a portrait from the life of Scott's bride. In personal appearance the two ladies are unmistakably identical, and Miss Charpentier, in a letter of November 27, 1797, chaffs her lover exactly as Julia Mannering chaffs her austere father. Scott had written about his desire to be buried in Dryburgh Abbey, and Miss Charpentier thought him dismal and premature. She did

not care for romance, she did not pamper Scott by pretending to the faintest sympathy with his studies, but she was a merry bride, a true wife, and, when the splendour of celebrity shone on Scott, it did *not* burn up (as a friend feared that it might) the unmoved Semele who shared the glory. Scott was married at Carlisle, in the church of St. Mary, on Christmas Eve, 1797.

I have often wondered whether, after his marriage, Scott was in the habit of meeting his "false love" in the society of Edinburgh. His heart was "handsomely pieced," he says, but *haeret lethalis arundo*.

CHAPTER II

Early Married Life, Ballad Collecting, *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*

THE Scotts, at Edinburgh, dwelt first in George Street, then in South Castle Street, and finally in the house in North Castle Street, where he resided till the time of his misfortunes. The rooms were soon full of old pikes and guns and bows, of old armour, and of old books. Already Scott's library was considerable. He had read enormously, and it is curious that a man of his unrivalled memory made so many written notes of his reading. "Reading makes a full man," but Gillies, an intelligent if unpractical bore, says that, when in the full tide of authorship later, Scott read comparatively little. His summers were passed in a cottage at Lasswade, in the society of his early friends, and of the families of Melville, of the historian, Patrick Fraser Tytler, Woodhouselee, and of Buc-





SIR WALTER SCOTT.
After the painting by Sir Henry Raeburn.

cleuch. His early friends were around him—William Erskine, a good man and fastidious critic, William Clerk, of Penicuik, Fergusson (Sir Adam), and many others. Gillies says that Scott lived "alone," and doubts "whether there was any one intimately connected with Sir Walter Scott whose mind and habits were exactly congenial." But it is a commonplace that we all "live alone," and certainly Scott seems to have believed that he found, especially in "Will Esrkine," all the sympathy, literary and social, that he could expect or desire. In 1798 he made a new acquaintance, Mat Lewis, famous then for his romance, *The Monk*, and busy with his *Tales of Wonder*.

Lewis, though no poet, was a neat metrist, and tutored Scott in the practical details of prosody. To Lewis Scott offered versions of German ballads, and other materials from his increasing store of original or traditional *Volkslieder*. He entered the realm of poetry, not by the usual gate of "subjective" lyrics about his own emotions, but through the antiquarian and historical gate of old popular ballads, newly opened by Bishop Percy, Herd, Ritson

the excitable antiquary, and others. Sir Philip Sidney had loved these songs of "blind crowders," Addison had praised them, Lady Wardlaw had imitated them, Burns had expressed but a poor opinion of them, but German research and imitation had given a new vogue to the ballads, which Scott, in boyhood, had collected whenever he possessed a shilling to buy a printed chant. The simplicity and spirit of the narrative folk songs did much to inspire and give vogue to Wolf's theory that the Homeric poems were, in origin, a kind of highly superior long ballads, handed down by oral tradition. In this theory Scott had no interest, about its truth he had no opinion, sitting silent and bored when it was debated by Coleridge and Morritt. "I never," he says, "was so bethumped with words." The vogue of the ballads lent a new blow at the poetical theories of the eighteenth century, and at the poetry of Pope. But Scott would not have it said that Pope was no poet, a poet he *was*, but he dealt with themes that were no longer so much appreciated as they had been in the age of Anne. Though a literary inno-

vator Sir Walter was not a literary iconoclast, and he loved no poetry better than the stately and manly melancholy of Dr. Johnson's imitations of Juvenal.

Mat Lewis's ballads were delayed in publication, but in January 1799 he negotiated with a Mr. Bell for the issue of Scott's version of Goethe's *Goetz Von Berlichingen*, "a very poor and incorrect translation;" so a former owner of my copy of Lockhart has pencilled on the margin. *Goetz*, at all events, made no impression on Coleridge's detested "reading public," and though Scott carried to London, in 1799, an original drama, *The House of Aspen*, which was put in rehearsal by Kemble, it never saw the footlights. In later life he expressed disgust at the idea of writing for "low and ignorant actors" (who may be supposed to know their own business); perhaps he had been mortified by the ways of managers. At this time his father died of paralysis; says Lockhart, "I have lived to see the curtain rise and fall once more on a similar scene." The *Glenfinlas* ballad was written at this time, founded on a legend of the murderous fairy

women of the woods, which I have heard from the lips of a boatman on Loch Awe, and which Mr. Stevenson found, unmistakably the same, among the natives of Samoa. A more important ballad, the first in which he really showed his hand, was *The Eve of St. John*, a legend of Smailholme tower. Here we find the true Border spirit, the superstitious thrill, the galloping metre, the essence of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. *Cadyow*, a ballad of the murder of the Regent Moray, is also of this period, and though not in the traditional manner, is most spirited.

Scott's destiny was now clear enough, the country had in him a new "maker." But he had no idea of a life of authorship, agreeing with Kerr of Abbotrule that "a Lord President Scott might well be a famous poet—in the vacation time." Literature, he said, was a good staff, but a bad crutch, and he looked to advance his worldly prospects and secure his livelihood by the profession of the Bar. Our other poets, as a rule, have meditated the Muse in perfect leisure, with no professional distractions. But Scott's literary work was all done

in hours stolen from an active official life. "I can get on quite as well from recollection of nature, while sitting in the Parliament House, as if wandering through wood and wold," he said to Gillies, "though liable to be roused out of a descriptive dream, if Balmuto, with a fierce grunt, demands, "Where are your cautioners?" Shelley composed while watching "the bees in the ivy bloom;" Keats, while listening to the nightingale; Scott, in the Parliament House, under the glare of Lord Balmuto. The difference in method is manifest in the difference of the results. But *Marmion* was composed during gallops among the hills of Tweedside.

At this date, the winter of 1799, Scott met his school friend James Ballantyne, then publishing a newspaper at Kelso, and Ballantyne printed twelve copies of the new ballads. Scott liked the typography, thought of a small volume of the old Border ballads, to be executed by his friend, and the die was cast. The success of *The Border Minstrelsy* made him an author, association with the printer helped him on the long road to financial ruin.

The same date, December 1799, saw Scott made Sheriff Depute of Selkirkshire, "the Shirra of the Forest." He at once invited Ballantyne to settle as a printer and publisher in Edinburgh, while in the Forest, when ballad hunting, he made the acquaintance of Leyden, scholar and poet, of William Laidlaw, his life-long friend, and of James Hogg, then an Ettrick swain, "the most remarkable man who ever wore the maud of a shepherd." Hogg had none of the education of Burns. "Self taught am I," he might have said, like the minstrel of Odysseus, "but the Muse puts into my heart all manner of lays." Hogg was indeed the survivor of such Borderers as, writes Bishop Lesley (1576), "make their own ballads of adventures for themselves." He has left a graphic account of his first meeting with Scott. "Oh, lad, the Shirra's come," said Scott's groom. "Are ye the chap *that makes* the auld ballads?" Hogg replied, "I could not say that I had made ony very auld ballads," but did James tell the truth? He is under suspicion of having made the "very auld ballad" of *Auld Maitland*, which his mother at once

chanted to the Shirra. Scott was as happy as his own Monkbarns, when he overheard Elspeth of the Burnfoot crooning the ballad of Harlaw. The old lady told the Shirra that she had learned *Auld Maitland* "frae auld Andrew Moor, and he learned it frae auld Baby Metlin" (Maitland) "wha was housekeeper to the first" (Anderson) "laird of Tushilaw. She was said to have been another than a gude ane. . . ."

Baby Metlin having this character, I sought for her, aided by the kindness of the minister of Ettrick, in the records of the Kirk Session of Ettrick, hoping to find her under Church censure for some lawless love. But there is no documentary trace of Baby, and the question is, could Hogg, then ignorant of libraries, above all of the Maitland MSS., have forged the ballad of *Auld Maitland*, and made his mother an accomplice in the pious fraud? It is to be remarked that Scott himself says that he obtained *Auld Maitland* in manuscript, from a farmer (Laidlaw), and that the copy was derived from the recital of "an old shepherd" (1802). None the less Mrs. Hogg may

also have recited it, having learned it from the old shepherd, Auld Andrew Moor. It is a delicate point in ballad criticism. Such a hoax, at this date, by the wily shepherd, appears to me to be impossible, and I lean to a theory that *Auld Maitland*, and *The Outlaw Murray*, are literary imitations of the ballad, compiled late in the seventeenth or early in the eighteenth century, on some Maitland and Murray traditions. In any case, Hogg had won the interest of Scott, whose temper he often tried but whose patience he never exhausted. For Leyden, a more trustworthy collector of ballads, Scott secured an appointment in the East, "a distant and a deadly shore."

In 1802, the two first volumes of *The Border Minstrelsy*, later added to and emended, were published in London, with all the treasures of ancient lore in prefaces and notes; the first fruits, and noble fruits they are, of Scott as an historian and writer in prose. Ballantyne, still at Kelso, was the printer. Scott remarks that "I observed more strict fidelity concerning my originals," than Bishop Percy had done. To what extent he altered and improved his

originals cannot be known. He confesses to "conjectural emendations" in *Kinmont Willie*, which he found "much mangled by reciters." Mr. Henderson credits him with verses ix–xii, "mainly," and with "numerous other touches." I do not think that in the ballad of Otterbourne he interpolated a passage bestowed on him by Mr. Henderson, for he twice quoted the lines in moments of great solemnity, and he was not the man to quote himself. The texts, though they passed the scrutiny of the fierce Ritson, are much more scientifically handled (with the aid of the Abbotsford and other MSS.) by Professor Child, in his noble collection. He notes over forty minute changes, in one ballad, from the MS. copy of Mrs. Brown. But *The Border Minstrelsy* gives the texts as the world knows them, as far as it *does* know them, while the prose elevates "a set of men whose worth was hardly known" to a pinnacle of romance. In their own days the Border riders were regarded as public nuisances by statesmen, who only attempted to educate them by the method of the gibbet. But now they were the delight of "fine ladies,

contending who shall be the most extravagant in encomium." A blessing on such fine ladies, who know what is good when they see it!

Scott says, with his usual acuteness, that we "sometimes impute that effect to the poet, which is produced by the recollections and associations which his verses excite." When a man has been born in the centre of Scott's sheriffdom, when every name of a place in the ballads and the *Lay* is dear and familiar to him, he cannot be the most impartial, though he may be not the least qualified critic of the poet, who, we must remember, wrote for his own people. By 1802, Scott announced to Ellis that he was engaged on "a long poem of my own . . . a kind of romance of Border chivalry, in a light horseman sort of stanza." This poem was *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which Borderers may be excused for thinking the best, the freshest, and the most spontaneous of all his romances in rhyme. The young Countess of Dalkeith (later, Duchess of Buccleuch) had heard from Mr. Beattie of Mickledale a story (known under another form, and as of recent date, in Glencoe) of a mysterious

being who made his appearance at a farm house, and there resided. The being uttered the cry *Tint, tint, tint!* (*Lost, lost, lost!*), and was finally summoned away by a Voice calling to him by the name of Gilpin Horner. This legend was "universally credited": Lady Dalkeith asked Scott to write a ballad on the theme, and thus Gilpin, though criticized as an excrescence on the *Lay*, was really its only begetter. While he was wondering what he could make of Gilpin, Scott heard part of Coleridge's *Christabel*, then in manuscript, recited by Sir John Stoddart. The measure of *Christabel* had previously been used in comic verse, by Anthony Hall, Anstey, Wolcott and others, and Scott seems to have assumed the right to employ it in a serious work. In this he showed something of the deficient sense of *meum* and *tuum* which marked his freebooting ancestors; and Coleridge, whose fragment was not published till many years later, resented the appropriation and often spoke of Scott's poetry with contempt. A year passed before Scott actually wrote the first stanzas of the *Lay*. He read them to Erskine and Crans-

toun, who said little, and he burned his manuscript. But later he found that the critics were too much puzzled by the novelty of the poem to give an opinion, and when one of them, probably Erskine, suggested that an explanatory prologue was necessary, Scott introduced the Last Minstrel, chanting to Monmouth's widow, and went on with the work, "at about the rate of a canto a week."

In this casual manner he "found himself," and his fame. The *Lay* was not published till 1805, and Scott's energies were being given to an edition of the romance of *Sir Tristrem*, and to elucidating the true history of his favourite Thomas the Rymer, of Ercildoune. In later days he purchased The Rymer's Glen, so he chose to style it, below Eildon tree, with the burn which murmurs by the cottage of Chiefswood. But *Sir Tristrem* and the Rymer were learned and unprofitable subjects. Despite his need of money, Sir Walter was always ready to spend his time and labour in literature which profited not, financially. "People may say this or that of the pleasure or fame or profit as a motive of writing," he remarks. "I

think the only pleasure is the actual exertion and research. . . ."

Society and his duties as Quartermaster-General of Volunteer horse were combined with research and composition. Invasion seemed imminent, and Scott worked both at his cavalry drill and at organizing the infantry militia of his sheriffdom. In September 1803 he met Wordsworth and his sister on their Scottish tour, when Wordsworth prayed for "an hour of that Dundee" who drove the army of Mackay in rout through the pass of Killiecrankie. It is curious to find Wordsworth, Ruskin and Scott united among the friends of Claverhouse! Wordsworth professed himself "greatly delighted" by Scott's recitation of four cantos of the *Lay*, though "the moving incident is not my trade," any more than admiration of contemporaries was Wordsworth's foible. Later the admiration was mainly on the side of Scott, though Wordsworth made noble amends in his beautiful sonnet on Scott's final and fated voyage to Italy.

Matters of finance were now occupying

Scott. At the Bar he had never much more practice than that which came to him from his father's office. That was little indeed, usually under £200 a year, and grew less when Scott's father died, and his gifted but gay brother, Thomas, mismanaged the business. With his sheriffdom, his private resources, and a legacy of about £6,000 from an uncle, Scott was at the head of £1,000 a year. He succeeded in obtaining the reversion of a Clerkship in the Court of Sessions, doing the work for nothing while the holder, an old man, lived; and, in the end of 1805, he put his £6,000 into the printing business of James Ballantyne.

This was the beginning of evils. A barrister ought not to be a secret partner in a commercial enterprise. Erskine alone knew the fact, and we do not hear that Erskine remonstrated. Lockhart regretted that Scott, who was now obliged to fix on a residence within his sheriffdom, did not buy Broadmeadows with his windfall of £6,000. The place is beautifully situated on the wooded left bank of Yarrow, between Hangingshaw and Bowhill, and hard by the cottage of Mungo Park, the African

traveller. Here Scott might have lived happy and remote, in the heart of his own country. But he was no hermit, he loved society, and he could not give up his military duties. He left Lasswade, the Gandercleugh of his *Tales of my Landlord*, and rented from a Russell cousin Ashestiel, a small house, in part very old, on a steep cliff overhanging the Tweed, above Yair. Only the hills behind the house severed him from Yarrow, the fishing was excellent, hard by is Elibank, the tower of his ancestress, "Muckle Mou'd Meg," and Selkirk, where he administered justice, is within an easy ride. The bridge over Tweed was not yet built, and Scott had the unfading pleasure of risking his life in riding the flooded ford. Here Scott reclaimed that honest poacher, Tom Purdie, his lifelong retainer and friend, who, with rustic liberality of speech, expressed his high opinion of Mrs. Scott's attractions. Hard by is Sunderland Hall, where Leslie's troops bivouacked before they surprised Montrose at Philiphaugh, and at Sunderland Hall was an excellent antiquarian library open to the Shirra. Of him little trace remains at Ashe-

stiel, save the huge arm-chair which was borrowed for him in his latest days of paralysis. At the Peel, within a few hundred yards, he had an intelligent neighbour, Mrs. Laidlaw, wife of "Laird Nippy," a bonnet laird of an ancient line which lay under an old curse, not unfulfilled. To Mrs. Laidlaw Scott presented all his poems, which, by her bequest, have come into the hands of the present writer. Had Scott been the owner, not the tenant, of Ashestiel, Abbotsford would never have existed, "that unhappy palace of his race."

It was in January 1805 that the *Lay* was published by Messrs. Longman. To appreciate the *Lay* and its success, we must either have read it in childhood, when "glamour" seems a probable art (as to some unknown extent it really is), and when lamps that burn eternally in tombs present no difficulties to the reason; or we must have imagination enough to understand how perfectly and delightfully *novel* was the poem. There had been a long interregnum in poetry in England. Cowper, as we learn from Miss Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*, was Scott's

only rival, and Cowper is not romantic. Wordsworth and Coleridge were practically unknown to "the reading public," Burns was barred by "the dialect," the school of Pope had dwindled into *The Triumphs of Temper*. Meanwhile Mrs. Radcliffe had kindled and fed the sacred lamp of love for all that Catherine Morland thought "truly horrid," and had been a favourite of Scott himself. In the *Lay* the eager public found mysteries far exceeding in delightfulness those of Mrs. Radcliffe, found magic genuine, all unlike her spells which are explained away; they found many novel and galloping measures of verse; they found nature; and they found a knowledge of the past such as has never been combined with glowing poetic imagination.

Mr. Saintsbury says with truth that "a very large, perhaps the much larger, part of the appeal of the *Lay* was metrical." Scott appeared to be as much an innovator in metres as Mr. Swinburne was, sixty years after him. Scott knew nothing at all (nor do I) about "the iambic dimeter, freely altered by the licences of equivalence, anacrusis, and catalexis": to

him these terms were "bonny critic's Greek," and as unintelligible as, to Andrew Fairservice, was "bonny lawyer's Latin." But it does seem that he gave "extreme care" to his "scheme of metre" in the *Lay*, not arranging it, as he said of one of his novels, "with as much care as the rest, that is, with no care at all." The result, to quote Mr. Saintsbury, is "to some tastes, a medium quite unsurpassed for the particular purpose," and Scott's later poems are, I venture to think, in metre less exquisitely appropriate, and more monotonous. His rhymed romances are in no sense epic, they are a new kind of composition based on the ballad, but, owing to their length, in need of constant variety of cadence. All these qualities were in the highest degree novel, and never to be successfully imitated, seriously, though susceptible of parody.

We do not now appreciate the charm of all this freshness. We live a century later, "the gambol has been shown," the Pegasus of romance has been put through all his paces before generations of *blasés* observers; witches, goblins, and reivers are hackneyed, and only the

young (for whom Scott, like Theocritus, professedly sang) can recapture the joy with which the world hailed the *Lay*. We have, moreover, what our ancestors of 1805 had not, the verse of Shelley, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Keats, and Coleridge present in our memories, verse deeply meditated, rich in thought, delicate in expression, "every reef loaded with gold." Scott has these great rivals now, in 1805 he had no rivals save those who filled the times, already remote, of great Elizabeth. Thus only the young, and they who have in their hearts every name and memory of Scott's hills and waters, can offer to the *Lay*, or to his other narrative poems, the welcome that the country gave in 1805. Only we, old Borderers, or fresh boys and girls, are at the point of view. Others may style the *Lay* "a thirdrate *Waverley* novel in rhyme," "let ilka man rouse the ford as he finds it"; it is a ford which I have many times ridden with pleasure during many years. Out of the romance I choose an episodic passage, in essence, though not in numbers, a ballad: it tells, traditionally, how the clan of Scott won fair Eskdale. Probably they

obtained it on the forfeiture of a liege lord far from "tame," that Maxwell who, on the execution of the red Regent, took the Morton title, dared the Douglas feud, and supported the Catholic cause to his ruin. But tradition speaks otherwise.

Scotts of Eskdale, a stalwart band,
Came trooping down to Todshawhill;
By the sword they won their land,
And by the sword they hold it still.

Hearken, Ladye, to the tale,
How thy sons won fair Eskdale. . . .
Earl Morton was lord of that valley fair,
The Beattisons were his vassals there.
The Earl was gentle, and mild of mood,
The vassals were warlike, and fierce, and rude;
High of heart and haughty of word,
Little they reck'd of a tame liege lord
The Earl into fair Eskdale came,
Homage and seignory to claim:
Of Gilbert the Galliard a heriot he sought,
Saying, "Give thy best steed, as a vassal ought."
. . . "Dear to me is my bonny white steed,
Oft has he help'd me at pinch of need;
Lord and Earl though thou be, I trow,
I can rein Bucksfoot better than thou." . .
Word on word gave fuel to fire,
Till so highly blazed the Beattison's ire,
But that the Earl the flight had ta'en,

The vassals there their lord had slain.
Sore he plied both whip and spur,
As he urged his steed through Eskdale muir;
And it fell down a weary weight,
Just on the threshold of Branksome gate.

The Earl was a wrathful man to see,
Full fain avenged would he be,
In haste to Branksome's Lord he spoke,
Saying—"Take these traitors to thy yoke:
For a cast of hawks, and a purse of gold
All Eskdale I'll sell thee, to have and hold:
Beshrew thy heart, of the Beattisons' clan
If thou leavest on Eske a landed man;
But spare Woodkerrick's lands alone,
For he lent me his horse to escape upon."
A glad man then was Branksome bold,
Down he flung him the purse of gold;
To Eskdale soon he spurred amain,
And with him five hundred riders has ta'en.
He left his merrymen in the mist of the hill,
And bade them hold them close and still;
And alone he wended to the plain,
To meet with the Galliard and all his train.
To Gilbert the Galliard thus he said: . . .
"Know thou me for thy liege-lord and head;
Deal not with me as with Morton tame,
For Scots play best at the roughest game.
Give me in peace my heriot due,
Thy bonny white steed, or thou shalt rue.
If my horn I three times wind,
Eskdale shall long have the sound in mind." . . .

Loudly the Beattison laugh'd in scorn;
" Little care we for thy winded horn.
Ne'er shall it be the Galliard's lot
To yield his steed to a haughty Scott.
Wend thou to Branksome back on foot,
With rusty spur and miry boot." . . .
He blew his bugle so loud and hoarse,
That the dun deer started at fair Craikcross;
He blew again so loud and clear,
Through the gray mountain-mist there did lances appear;
And the third blast rang with such a din
That the echoes answered from Pentoun-linn,
And all his riders came lightly in.
Then had you seen a gallant shock,
When saddles were emptied, and lances broke!
For each scornful word the Galliard had said,
A Beattison on the field was laid.
His own good sword the chieftain drew,
And he bore the Galliard through and through;
Where the Beattisons' blood mix'd with the rill,
The Galliard's Haugh men call it still.
The Scots have scatter'd the Beattison clan,
In Eskdale they left but one landed man.
The valley of Eske, from the mouth to the source,
Was lost and won for that bonny white horse.

For the rest, from fair Margaret, the lost love,

Lovelier than the rose so red,
Yet paler than the violet pale,

to Wat Tinnlin, and

> The hot and hardy Rutherford
> Whom men called Dickon-draw-the-sword,

the characters are all my ancient friends, and the time has been when the romance was history to me. The history, of course, is handled with all Scott's freedom. Michael Scott had been dead for several centuries, not for some seventy years, and the approximate date of the tale must be the year of the religious revolution, 1559–1560; "the Regent" must be Mary of Guise. Men no longer made their vows to St. Modan and St. Mary of the Lowes, whose chapel the Scots burned in 1557: it had become fashionable to wreck churches, thanks to preaching bakers and tailors, Paul Methuen and Harlaw. Be these things as they may, and let critics be critics as of old,

> Still Yarrow, as he rolls along
> Bears burden to the Minstrel's song.

The *Lay*, as Scott wrote to Wordsworth, "has the merit of being written with heart and good will, and for no other reason than to discharge my mind of the ideas which from infancy have rushed upon it. I believe such verses will generally be found interesting, because enthus-

iastic." Whoso reads the *Lay* as it was written, "with heart and goodwill," is not likely to complain of its lack of interest. The opening dialogue of the Spirits of river and hill, the ride of William of Deloraine through the red spate of Ail water, the scene of fair Melrose beheld aright, the opening of the Wizard's tomb, in the splendour of the lamp that burns eternally; the fluttering viewless forms that haunt the aisles; the tilting between Cranstoun and Deloraine; the pranks of the page; the courage of the young Buccleuch; his bluff English captors; the bustle of the Warden's raid; the riding in of the outlying mosstroopers; the final scene of the Wizard's appearance and the passing of the page; with the beautiful ballads of the minstrels, make up a noble set of scenes, then absolutely fresh and poignant.

While the public, unlike Sir Henry Eglefield, did not need three readings to convince them of the excellence of the *Lay*, the critics were as wise as usual. It is never easy to keep one's temper in reading Jeffrey's criticisms. If not "the ideal whipper-snapper," at least

he was always thinking, not of the natural appeal of a poet "to the simple primary feelings of his kind," but of what Mr. Jeffrey could say to the abatement of the poet's merits. Ellis thought Jeffrey's review "equally acute and impartial," and it *was* impartial compared with his critique of *Marmion*. The poem should have been something else, not what it was. It should have "been more full of incident," as if it *could* be more full of incident! The Goblin was "a merely local superstition," to which Scott, of all men, could most easily have replied by proofs that the superstition, practically that of the Brownie, is universal. For example Froissart gives us, in Orthon, a goblin page, though not a malevolent specimen of the genus. Jeffrey said, and one would "like to have felt Mr. Jeffrey's bumps"—as Charles Lamb said of a less famous dullard—that "Mr. Scott must either sacrifice his Border prejudices, or offend his readers in the other parts of the Empire!" Jeffrey writes like the snappish pedant of a provincial newspaper. When *Marmion* appeared, Jeffrey found, on the other hand, that it was not

Scottish enough! Pitt and Fox equally admired the work, the public bought it as poetry is no longer bought, and Scott sold his copyright at the ransom of £500, which, with a royalty of £169 6*s*. on the first edition, and a present of £100 to buy a horse, from Messrs. Longman, made up his whole literary profits on the transaction.

The money probably went into his printing business, with Ballantyne & Co., and already (1805) we find that firm "receiving accommodation from Sir William Forbes," the banker. They were always receiving or being refused "accommodation"; Scottish business had a paper basis; its bills represented fairy gold that turned to withered leaves; though Scott, as an Editor (of Dryden's works at this time), put large quantities of business in the way of his printing firm. His practice at the Bar was a thing of the past: he was waiting for dead men's shoes as a Clerk of the Court of Session; and, while toiling over Dryden's works, he began *Waverley*, hoping to publish it by Christmas 1805. He purposely did not make a brilliant start, though the description of

Edward Waverley's studies is a copy of his own, and William Erskine did not think highly of the first seven chapters. So Scott threw the manuscript aside, to his admirers a misfortune. *Waverley* would have been as great a success as it was nine years later: Scott would have worked the new vein, the "Bonanza mine," and for eighteen new Waverley novels (at the rate of two yearly) we would cheerfully give up *Marmion*, *The Lady of the Lake*, *Rokeby*, and *The Lord of the Isles*. *Dis aliter visum*.

It was now that Scott adopted the system of rising from bed to write at five in the morning. On one occasion he had the cruelty to return and awake Mrs. Scott, with the tidings, which he knew to be wholly uninteresting to her, that he had discovered the meaning of the name of a burn that passes through his estate. While taking brief holiday at Gilsland, he was summoned to mount and ride to Dalkeith, the rendezvous of the Forest, by the beacon fire which proved to be a false alarm. The story is told in *The Antiquary*. Scott met the Forest men pouring in down every water, and I have

heard, from my own people, that the inhabitants of the little Border towns meant to burn them, if Napoleon landed, drive their flocks into the hills, and fight it out in the old Border way, a burnt country and a guerilla foe. It was during his ride of a hundred miles in twenty-four hours that Scott composed the lines beginning—

> The forest of Glenmore is dree,
> It is all of black pine and the dark oak tree.

The April of 1806 saw Scott in London; already a "lion," he was presented at the tiny Court of Caroline, Princess of Wales, who at this time was taken up by the Tories, as the Prince of Wales was then of the Whig party; much as another Prince of Wales, Frederick, was something of a Jacobite. He found that the Princess had an exaggerated freedom of manner, and presently "it came to be thought so." She called him "a faint-hearted troubadour," and he had no mind for the part of Chastelard. In town he met Joanna Baillie, whose plays he appreciated with more of generosity than critical faculty. His instalment

as Clerk of Session was not welcomed by the Whigs, and, in irritation, "he for the first time put himself forward as a decided Tory partisan." The Tories, at all events, were not pro-French. It would have been well if Scott could have taken the advice of Lord Dalkeith (Feb. 20, 1806), "Go to the hills and converse with the Spirit of the Fells, or any Spirit but the Spirit of Party, which is the fellest fiend that ever disturbed Harmony and social pleasure."

On July 27, 1806, Scott wrote his "Health to Lord Melville," the Tory governing spirit of Scotland, whom the Whigs were impeaching. James Ballantyne sang this lay at a public dinner on Lord Melville's acquittal. The Princess of Wales was saluted in this song, which contained the words "Tally ho to the Fox" (C. J. Fox). This does not appear an amazing indiscretion, in a parcel of party verses, but the Whigs were greatly shocked. If a Briton must be a party man, he may as righteously belong to one party as the other. But the Whigs ever cherished the belief that they were the righteous. The worst effect of

Scott's politics was his connexion with journals, from the stately *Quarterly* to the inglorious *Beacon*, which carried political rancour into literary criticism. It is true that Hazlitt wrote as furiously and vilely against Coleridge in *The Edinburgh Review*, which was Whig, as any one ever did against Keats in *The Quarterly*, which is Tory. But Whig offences, in history as in literature, are condoned by historians, and forgotten by most people, while Gifford, of the *Quarterly*, and the conductors of *Blackwood* remain in the pillory. In any case, with the brutal outrages of criticism Scott had nothing to do. He was foremost to praise *Frankenstein*, supposing it to be by Shelley, when Shelley was the target of Tory insults; and he invited Charles Lamb to Abbotsford, when Lamb was being attacked as a leader of the Cockney School.[1] Lamb missed the chance of coursing and salmon fishing with a Scot who would not have aroused in him "an imperfect sympathy."

[1] I noticed Lamb's reply, declining the invitation, in the MSS. at Abbotsford.

However Lamb and Shelley were not known in Scotland in 1806, when the affairs of Scott's brother Thomas made it necessary for Walter to earn money by his pen. He received £1,000 from Constable for the copyright of an unwritten poem, *Marmion*, and mortgaged his time and genius to help a brother. Constable was then rather a dealer in rare old books than a publisher, but he foresaw Scott's success, and outbid Messrs. Longman, if, indeed, they made any bid at all. To his brother Thomas he wrote a series of letters, still, I think, unpublished, and mainly noteworthy for the goodness of head, the wisdom, the benevolence and tact of the writer. By the end of 1807 he was finishing at once his *Life of Dryden*, and his *Marmion*; who, as he wrote to Lady Louisa Stuart in January 1808, is "gasping upon Flodden Field," though Scott hoped, that day, "to knock him on the head with a few thumping stanzas." When we remember that, by his brother's failure, the whole affairs of the estates of the Marquis of Abercorn were thrown on his hands "in a state of unutterable confusion," and at his own responsibility, we

may estimate his industry. Describing the research needed by his *Dryden* he writes—

> From my research the boldest spiders fled,
> And moths retreating trembled as I read,

while at the same time he was leading Marmion from disgrace to death, and was passing the heart of the day in his official duties (1807). But by the end of February 1808, *Marmion* was in the hands of the public, equipped with the charming epistles to friends which precede the cantos.

Contrasting the over full life of Scott, and all his innumerable distractions, with the "day long blessed idleness" of Tennyson, we cannot expect from *Marmion* the delicate finish of *The Idylls of the King*. On the other hand, if Scott had enjoyed the leisure of Tennyson, his rhymed romances would not have been better or other than they are.

In the Introduction to Canto Third, written to Erskine, he tells us that criticism was wasted on him—

> Then wild as cloud, or stream or gale,
> Flow forth, flow unconfined, my tale.



SIR WALTER SCOTT.
From the painting by Sir David Wilkie, R.A.



SIR WALTER SCOTT, 1830.
From the painting by Sir John Watson Gordon, R.A.

He will not imitate

> those masters, o'er whose tomb
> Immortal laurels ever bloom,
> Instructive of the feeble bard

as the murmurs from the tomb may be. He will not even desert the fabled past to chant the glories of the "Red Cross Knight" (Sir Sidney Smith), nor of Sir Ralph Abercromby. But he foresees and predicts

> The hour of Germany's revenge,

and that then

> When breathing fury for her sake,
> Some new Arminius shall awake,
> Her champion, ere he strike, shall come,
> To whet his sword on Brunswick's tomb.

In few years the hour and the champion came, Field-Marshal Von Blücher. A poet has seldom been a better prophet.

The plot of *Marmion* is in one way strangely akin to the plot of *Ivanhoe*. In both we have a hard-bitten, hard-hearted, and unscrupulous knight, Marmion and the Templar. In both

we have a pilgrim guide, who is no pilgrim, but a knight in disguise, returned from exile, with a deep grudge against the Templar, or Marmion (Wilfred, Wilton). Both sets of partners are rivals in love, at least if Wilfred, as we believe, loved Rebecca. In both we have a tourney between the rivals, in which Marmion and the Templar are defeated by Wilton and Wilfred. But Marmion's behaviour, both in regard to his lady page, and in the matter of the forgery, is much worse than that of the Templar at his worst, though, amidst his infamy, he is a knight as bold and haughty as the traitor Ganelon in the *Chanson de Roland*. The high revenge of the lady page, Constance, as she goes to her death by hunger, stirred even Jeffrey. "The scene of elfin chivalry" in which Marmion tilts with the phantom knight, was suggested by a Latin legend, forged and sent to Scott by Surtees of Mainsforth, who several times palmed off on the Sheriff ballads of his own making. Pitscottie, the candid old Fifeshire chronicler, supplied the omens which, as in the *Odyssey*, lead up to the catastrophe of Flodden Field.

Marmion was made to travel to Edinburgh by a path that mortal man never took, Scott desiring to describe the castles on the way, and a favourite view of Edinburgh from Blackford Hill. This passage of landscape has been elaborately and justly praised by Mr. Ruskin. For poetical purposes Lady Heron is brought to Holyrood, though she was at her castle beneath Flodden Edge, and the artifice is justified by her song of *Young Lochinvar*. But it is the closing battle piece that makes the fortune of *Marmion*.

"All ends in song," and in song end Scotland's sorrows for that fatal unforgotten fight, in which all was lost but honour. Scarce a great family but lost her sons, the yeomen and peasants died like paladins, and the strongest of the Stuart kings made the best end of all of them, rushing forth from the fighting "schiltrom" and falling, pierced with arrows and hacked with bills, not a lance's length from the English general. For this we have Surrey's own word, and true it is that if the Scots were never led with less skill, they never did battle with more indomitable courage. Had no

every leader fallen, save Home, the next day would have seen a renewal of the battle—

> Where shivered was fair Scotland's Spear,
> And broken was her shield.

Flodden secured the success of *Marmion*, and gave the laurels to the brow of Scott. But it is certain that our age could dispense with Clara and her lover! The fiend of party, detested by Lord Dalkeith, moved the Whigs to take umbrage because more moan was made for Pitt than for Fox in one of the Introductory pieces, where by an error of the press several lines of the lament for Fox were omitted in early copies. "All the Whigs here are in arms against *Marmion*," wrote Scott (March 13, 1808). Jeffrey now complained of "the manifest neglect of Scottish feelings," which had been so injuriously flattered in the *Lay*, to the indignation of the rest of the Empire! Lockhart justly remarks that it was the *British* patriotism which vexed Jeffrey, whose *Edinburgh Review* did its best to throw cold water on the spirit of national resistance to Napoleon. He professed that his stupid criticism was a

well meant effort to draw Scott from "so idle a task" as that in which he displayed his "pedantry." Scott could bear the spite till Jeffrey charged him with want of patriotism, and that arrow rankled. Jeffrey dined with him on the day when Scott read the critique, and was cordially received, but his host ceased to write in the *Edinburgh Review*, and raised up another like unto it, a rival, the Tory *Quarterly*.

CHAPTER III

Quarterly Review, *Lady of the Lake*, *Rokeby*, Ballantyne Affairs

AS Scott had now become a professional man of letters, while remaining a well paid official, it may be convenient to glance at the state of the literary calling in 1808. Britain was not yet a wildly excitable and hysterical country. Rapidity of communication of news had not irritated the nerves of the community. We won or lost a battle, but as men knew nothing about it till long after the event, as they did not sit with their eyes on a tape, as there were not fresh editions of the evening newspaper every quarter of an hour, they could be engaged in war without wholly abandoning the study and purchase of books. A few years after Scott's death, a Parliamentary Commission inquired into the financial conditions of publishers and authors. The Commission learned, from one of Messrs.

Longmans' firm, that it was not unusual for gentlemen to "form libraries" (the expression "every gentleman's library" survives as a jest), but that the practice began to decline in 1814, and had now ceased to be.

The man who killed the formation of private libraries was Walter Scott. His *Waverley* appeared in 1814, and henceforth few people purchased any books except novels. Poetry soon became a "drug in the market," and the taste for "the classics," whether ancient or modern, died away: the novel was everything, and presently novels were procured from the circulating library.

It was the fortune of Scott to take full advantage of the traditional usage of "forming libraries" in the years between the appearance of the *Lay* and of *Waverley*. He edited Dryden in many volumes, and was fairly well paid. By doubling the price, Constable induced him to edit Swift's works, and to write the best extant *Life of Swift*. He also edited the important Sadleir Papers, the diplomatic correspondence of the agent of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, a most valuable book to the historian,

and he was concerned in many antiquarian publications. These were undertaken partly from love of the past, partly for the purpose of gaining employment for needy men of letters like Henry Weber, a German who later became insane and challenged Scott to a pistol duel across a table! Constable was usually the publisher of the ventures, but Constable had a partner, a Mr. Hunter, a laird, no less, who bullied Weber, and behaved to Scott in a manner which he deemed insufferable.

Again, politics came between Constable and Scott. Constable was the publisher of the *Edinburgh Review*, which had filled up the measure of its iniquities. No man likes to be called an unpatriotic pedant, and Jeffrey, in the *Edinburgh Review*, had called Scott both pedantic and unpatriotic. Again, the year 1808 saw the Spanish national rising against Napoleon. Backed by Britain and Wellington, and by the infatuation of Bonaparte himself,[1] by the fatuous Moscow expedition, and the revenge of Germany, the rising of the Peninsula overthrew the French Emperor.

[1] Ἔφῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὑπὲρ μόρον ἀλγὲ ἔχουσιν.

But the *Edinburgh Review* and the Whigs had no taste for a national rising in the name of freedom. The Spanish, they observed, were a Catholic and intolerant people, not like the liberal French. The Spanish insurrections began in massacres of unpopular officials, and, at Valencia (June 6, 7, 1808), in the murder of the whole colony of French merchants in the town. That French Republican mobs should massacre uncounted victims was very well: it was intolerable to the Whigs that Spanish Catholic mobs should imitate them. The Spanish cause was both disreputable and desperate, said the Whigs. England, if she aided Spain, must perish in the same ruin. Such was the song of the *Edinburgh Review*, at that time the only critical journal conducted by educated men. Meanwhile Scott recognized the genius of Wellesley—"I would to God he were now at the head of the English in Spain!"

For personal and political reasons then, as a patriot and a poet outraged, Scott determined not only to counteract the *Edinburgh Review*, but to set up a rival to Constable, its publisher

It is difficult to trace each step in his scheme of resistance to Constable and Whiggery. But John Murray, then a young publisher in London, saw his opportunity of winning Scott away from Constable; he determined to back, financially, the Ballantynes in London, and he visited Ashestiel in October 1808. He had heard of the nascent *Lady of the Lake*, he had heard of *Waverley* as "on the stocks," and he wished to have his share. From a letter of Scott to his brother Thomas, we learn that the old staff of *The Antijacobin*, including Canning, now Prime Minister, and Frere, had been "hatching a plot" for a Tory rival to the *Edinburgh Review*. Scott had been offered the Editorship, with "great prospects of emolument," and the new serial was to have private information from Government. But for many obvious reasons, Scott could not take the Editorship, which fell to Gifford, a man of bad health, bad temper, and procrastinating habits, feared and unpopular as a satirist. Heber and Ellis, however, were ready to aid contributors, and Scott's letters reveal his opinion of the state of literary criticism.

As is usual, periodical criticism revelled in "a facetious and rejoicing ignorance." Specialists could not write what the public would read; editors like Jeffrey added flippancy to their dull lucubrations. Reviewing had long been indolently good natured: the *Edinburgh Review* had set the fashion of being tart and bitter; the fashion pleased, and "the minor reviews give us all abuse and no talent." The age of "slashing" criticism had begun, and Scott held that "decent, lively, and reflecting criticism" would be welcome. He knew Gifford's temper, and hoped to abate it. "We must keep our swords clear as well as sharp, and not forget the gentlemen in the critics." Had Scott accepted the Editorship, with Heber, Ellis, Southey, and other gentlemen for his *aides*, the *Quarterly* would have been what he desired it to be. But a satirist was the Editor, and for long the tone was "savage and tartarly," in cases well remembered. Many of Scott's best essays, however, appeared in the *Quarterly*.

His indignation, and we may say his infatuation, found vent in another project. Lock-

hart may be too severe in his account of James Ballantyne's brother John, who, after failing in various undignified lines, was started as a publisher by Scott, in 1809. Scott supplied most of the capital; John was expected to manage the accounts, and so the fatal business began. Nobody could call the Ballantynes "gentlemen," whether in a heraldic or any other sense of the word. But both, in several ways, consciously or unconsciously amused Scott; he was deeply attached to them, and they to him. That he had such henchmen was his own fault: they were, so to speak, his Cochranes and Oliver Sinclairs, the unworthy favourites who were the ruin of the old Stuart Kings. Lockhart says that "a more reckless, thoughtless, improvident adventurer" than the festive John "never rushed into the serious responsibilities of business," while James "never understood book-keeping or could bring himself to attend to it with regularity." Scott, on the other hand, thoroughly understood business, and kept systematic accounts of his private expenditure.

But his success carried him, as it carried the

great Emperor his contemporary, beyond himself. He felt adequate to all labours, however diverse; he was as confident as Napoleon in his own star; he entered on this publishing business as Napoleon invaded Russia, without organized supplies (for Mr. Murray soon withdrew from the Ballantyne alliance), and disaster was always at his doors. Between 1805 and 1810 he invested at least £9,000 in the Ballantyne companies, and night by night the fairy gold won by his imagination changed into worthless paper. We cannot here attempt to distribute exactly the shares of blame which fall to Scott and to the Ballantynes. Mr. Cadell uses the word "hallucination" to qualify Scott's part in the business. I have examined these complicated matters carefully,[1] and the gist of the explanation lies in a remark of James Ballantyne. "The large sums received never formed an addition to stock. In fact they were all expended by the partners, who, being then young and sanguine men, not unwillingly adopted my brother John's sanguine results."

[1] *Life of Lockhart*, vol. ii. pp. 126–172.

They accepted John's book-keeping at a venture, and, to use a slang phrase, they "blued" the apparent profits. That is the secret.

To leave a repulsive theme, in 1809 Scott visited the Highlands, he began *The Lady of the Lake*, which had long "simmered" in his mind, and he rode Fitz James's ride from Loch Vennachar to Stirling, finding it practicable, though the ground, to be sure, must have been very different in the days of James V, when lochs occupied what is now arable land. At Buchanan House, on this tour, he read *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, and briefly spoke of the author as "a whelp of a young Lord Byron . . . abusing me for endeavouring to scratch out a living with my pen. God help the bear if, having little else to eat, he must not even suck his own paws." But, like the Moslems in Thackeray's "The White Squall" he "thought but little of it," and did not dream of repaying Byron in kind.

As he wrote to Lady Abercorn, "If I did not rather dislike satire from principle than feel myself altogether disqualified from it by nature, I have the means of very severe

retaliation in my power," particularly with respect to the Whigs of Holland House. Scott never used his powers as a satirist. He was remarkably skilled in the playful imitation of the styles of other poets, a faculty scarcely to have been expected from one so careless of finish in his own productions. He could easily have retaliated on Byron and others in the manner of Pope; but, as he thought, satire is the lowest, because the least sincere, of all forms of composition. Mankind is weary of the points and the feigned indignation of the satirist, and as "damns have had their day," according to Bob Acres, versified satire too is fortunately in the limbo of things obsolete.

Scott seems usually to have had in his mind the theme for his next poem but one before he had finished its predecessor. In an excursion to Stirling, during the autumn of 1808, he told Mrs. Scott that he hoped one day "to make the earth yawn" at Bannockburn, "and devour the English archery and knighthood, as it did on that celebrated day of Scottish glory." The design was long deferred, and when it was fulfilled, the Earth is not the only

person who yawns in the course of *The Lord of the Isles.*

In a life that was now very happy, whether spent in London, in Edinburgh, or in coursing and spearing salmon with the Ettrick Shepherd at Ashestiel, Scott occupied his morning hours with his edition of Swift, with the editing of the Somers Tracts, and with *The Lady of the Lake*, which appeared in May 1810.

The feud with Constable was now dying of natural decline, and Scott and Jeffrey were quite forgetting their differences. Scott had never concealed from Jeffrey his opinion that the critic knew nothing of the heart and glow of poetry, and Jeffrey, before publishing his review of *The Lady of the Lake* sent his proof sheets to Scott, expressing his regret for the "heedless asperities" in the criticism of *Marmion.* "Believe me when I say that I am sincerely proud both of your genius and your glory, and that I value your friendship more highly than most of either my literary or political opinions." Jeffrey was a good fellow at heart, though, in criticising contemporary poetry, he spoke most highly of a certain Pro-

fessor Brown! He found *The Lady of the Lake* "more polished in its diction" than its predecessors, and certainly its rhyming octosyllabic couplets are more monotonous than the varied cadences of the *Lay*. "It never expresses a sentiment which it can cost the most ordinary reader any exertion to comprehend," which is true enough, but is no less true of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The general chorus of praise, and the rush of tourists to Loch Katrine and Ellen's Isle, did not turn Scott's head, or persuade him that he was a poet of the first order. Miss Scott told James Ballantyne that she had not read *The Lady of the Lake*. "Papa says there is nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry." Yet he confessedly wrote for "young people of spirit." He says, "I can, with honest truth, exculpate myself from having been at any time a partisan of my own poetry, even when it was in the highest fashion with the million."

Meanwhile, whosoever, in youth, has read the magical lines—

> The stag at eve had drunk his fill
> Where danced the moon on Monan's rill,

and has followed the chase across the Brig of Turk, to

> The lone lake's western boundary

has to thank Scott for leading him into the paradise of romance, and cares not how low the literary critics may rate the Minstrel. Such a reader has been with

> mountains that like giants stand
> To sentinel enchanted land.

Other enchanted lands there are, but to one Scott has given him the key, to a land where the second-sighted man foretells the coming of the stranger, and the prophet sleeps swathed in the black bull's hide in the spray of the haunted linn.

Never can we forget the hurrying succession of pictures that pass by the bearer of the fiery cross, or the song of the distraught Blanche that gives warning to Fitz James.

> The toils are pitch'd, and the stakes are set,
> Ever sing merrily, merrily;
> The bows they bend, and the knives they whet,
> Hunters live so cheerily.

It was a stag, a stag of ten,
Bearing his branches sturdily;
He came stately down the glen,
Ever sing hardily, hardily.

It was there he met with a wounded doe,
She was bleeding deathfully;
She warned him of the toils below,
Oh, so faithfully, faithfully!

He had an eye and he could heed,
Ever sing warily, warily;
He had a foot, and he could speed,
Hunters watch so narrowly.

On this passage the egregious Jeffrey wrote—

"No machinery can be conceived more clumsy for effecting the deliverance of a distressed hero, than the introduction of a mad woman, who, without knowing or caring about the wanderer, warns him, *by a song*, to take care of the ambush that was set for him. The maniacs of poetry have indeed had a prescriptive right to be musical, since the days of Ophelia downwards; but it is rather a rash extension of this privilege to make them sing good sense, and to make sensible people be guided by them."

Scott recked so lightly of this censure that he repeated the situation (his novels often repeat the situations of his poems), the warning lilts of a brainsick girl, in *The Heart of Midlothian*, in that most romantic passage where Madge Wildfire's snatches of song give warning to the fugitive lover of Effie Deans. These parallelisms between the structure of the rhymed and of the anonymous prose romances are frequent and curious.

The whole poem of *The Lady of the Lake* is inimitably vivacious, it has on it the dew of morning in a mountain pass: the King is worthy of the praise of Scott's princes given to Byron by the Prince of Wales, who, with all his faults, could appreciate Walter Scott and Jane Austen. "I told the Prince," Byron wrote to Scott, "that I thought you more particularly the painter of Princes, as they never appeared more fascinating than in *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*. He was pleased to coincide, and to dwell on the description of your James's as no less royal than poetical. He spoke alternately of Homer and yourself, and seemed well acquainted with

both." A British king well acquainted with Homer is hardly the idiot of Thackeray's satire.

Scott said in taking farewell of his work—

Yet, once again, farewell, thou Minstrel Harp!
Yet, once again, forgive my feeble sway,
And little reck I of the censure sharp
May idly cavil at an idle lay.
Much have I owed thy strains on life's long way,
Through secret woes the world has never known,
When on the weary night dawn'd wearier day,
And bitterer was the grief devour'd alone,
That I o'erlive such woes, Enchantress! is thine own.

He had shown more of his heart than he cared to show, and passed the confession off with a quotation from Master Stephen, who deemed melancholy "a gentlemanly thing."

Scott's gains from *The Lady of the Lake* must have been considerable, though of course not nearly so great as the profits of a modern dealer in fustian novels. A prudent poet would have regarded the money as capital, and Scott, as we said, did place at least £9,000 in his Ballantyne companies. But it appears that the money was no sooner in than the profits

were taken out again for the private expenditure of the partners.

It really seems that Scott often was deceived, or at least confused, as to the state of his commercial accounts. He used to write to John Ballantyne, his book-keeper, in the strain of an affectionate elder brother, imploring "dear John" to "have the courage to tell disagreeable truths to those whom you hold in regard," "not to shut your eyes or blind those of your friends upon the actual state of business." The advice was given in vain, says Lockhart, and he explains that Scott's own conduct made his counsels of no avail. The Ballantynes could not inquire strictly into Scott's "uncommercial expenditure," because, while he was the only moneyed partner, they had "trespassed largely, for their own purposes, on the funds of the companies." The same reason, namely that the money was not theirs, made it impossible for them to check Scott's commercial expenditure on the publication of huge antiquarian volumes, exquisitely ill done by the many literary hangers-on for whom he wished to procure a livelihood. These piles of

waste paper remained on the hands of his publishing company, which was also bearing the weight of that Old Man of the Sea, his Annual Register, irregularly published at a loss of £1,000 a year. Thus, although the excitements of the Peninsular and other wars did not prevent the public from buying Scott's poetry largely, the Ballantyne companies went from one bank to another in search of accommodation, while Scott lived as joyously as La Fontaine's grasshopper, in the summer weather of his genius.

In 1810 he showed the fragment of *Waverley* to James Ballantyne, who looked on it without enthusiasm. James was to Scott what the old housekeeper was to Molière, a touchstone of public taste; his remarks on the margins of Scott's proof-sheets show that he was rather below the level of general ignorance, and rather more morally sensitive than the common prude of the period. He could throw cold water on *Waverley*, but could not restrain Scott from publishing Dr. Jamieson's *History of the Culdees*, and Weber's egregious "Beaumont and Fletcher"). Business looked so

bad that in 1810 Scott entertained the notion of seeking a judicial office in India.

His next poem, *Don Roderick*—"this patriotic puppet show" he called it—he gave, since silver and gold he had none, as a subscription to the fund for ruined Portuguese. Scott, in *Don Roderick*, passed Sir John Moore over in silence, not because Moore was a Whig, but because Scott did not appreciate the much disputed strategy of that great soldier and good man. Neither Moore's glorious death, nor his stand at Corunna, expiated, in Scott's opinion, the disasters of his hurried retreat. It was at this time that his friend, Captain Fergusson, read *The Lady of the Lake* aloud, the sixth canto, to the men of his command, under artillery fire.

A trifling piece, *The Inferno of Altesidora*, contained verses in the manner of Crabbe, Moore, and himself; these are excellent imitations, and, with a lyric, *The Resolve*, in the manner of the Caroline poets, justify the opinion that Scott would have been a formidable satirist had he chosen to attack Byron and the Whigs in the manner and measure of Pope.

As Scott had now a near prospect of a salary of £1,300 a year, for his hitherto unpaid labours as Clerk of Session, he yielded to the fatal temptation of purchasing a small estate on Tweedside. This purchase was really an antiquarian extravagance; he wished to add to his collection the field of the last great Border clan battle, fought in 1526 between the clans of Scott and Ker, including the stone called Turn Again, where an Elliot checked the pursuit by spearing Ker of Cessford. The two farms which he bought were styled Cartley or Clarty Hole, and Kaeside, "a bare haugh and a bleak bank," said Scott, and there was an ugly little farmhouse at Clarty Hole, rechristened Abbotsford, in memory of the monks of Melrose. It is not a good site, lying low, close to the existing public road, and the proprietor had not the charter for salmon fishing in the pools beneath his house. But the property was all "enchanted land," rich in legends and Border memories of Thomas of Ercildoune and of battles, while Scott often cast longing eyes on the adjacent Faldonside, once the home of Andrew Ker, the most ruffianly of Riccio's

murderers, and on the perfect little peel tower of Darnick. Washington Irving says that Scott spoke to him of a project of buying Smailholme Tower. Like almost all Scots for many centuries, the Sheriff longed to be a landed man; his lease of Ashestiel was ended, and, above all, the land which he now purchased was rich in antiquarian interest. So he collected farms, began to rebuild the house of Clarty Hole, and entered on his private Moscow expedition, the Making of Abbotsford. The first farm purchased was dear at the £4,000 which was its price. Meanwhile, a source which, in our day, would have proved a mine of gold to Scott, was by him unworked. He would not dramatize his poems, or, later, his novels, for the stage, and every adventurer made prize of them.

Early in 1812 Scott began *Rokeby*, a poem on the home of his friend Morritt, and in May he "flitted" in a gipsy-like procession from Ashestiel to Abbotsford. But *Childe Harold* appeared before *Rokeby*; Scott disliked the popular misanthropy of *The Childe*, but privately declared it to be "a poem of most

extraordinary power, which may rank its author with our first poets." Scott burned the whole of his first draft of *Rokeby* (canto 1), because " I had corrected the spirit out of it." Meanwhile Scott and Byron became correspondents, in a tone, to quote Lockhart, " of friendly confidence equally honourable to both these great competitors, without rivalry, for the favour of the literary world." Of *Rokeby*, which appeared in the last days of 1812, Scott said that it was a " pseudo romance of pseudo chivalry," though he liked the beautiful lyrics interspersed through the poem, and rather piqued himself on the character of the outlaw Bertram, who has won the applause of Mr. Swinburne. The scene of *Rokeby* is English, and of the characters Lockhart says that, in a prose romance " they would have come forth with effect hardly inferior to any of all the groups Scott ever created." Scott told Miss Edgeworth that Matilda was drawn from " a lady who is now no more," his lost love, and that most of the other personages " are mere shadows." The poet never left much for his critics to say in the way of disapproval.

The poem, *enfin*, was in no way a success. Mocking birds of song had wearied the public of Scott by endless imitation.

> "Most can raise the flowers now,
> For all have got the seed,"
> "And now again the people
> Call it but a weed."

Scott himself was imitating himself in *The Bridal of Triermain*, to "set a trap for Jeffrey," who was expected to take Erskine for the author. He was boyishly reckless of his reputation; he easily resigned the lists when Byron "beat him," as he says, and in the year 1813 was harassed by "the ignoble melancholy of pecuniary embarrassment."

A crisis had come in the affairs of Ballantyne & Co. The interest, for us, lies in the light which the crisis throws on the character of Scott. We have seen that a friend wrote, at the time of his disappointment in love, about Scott's "violent" and "ungovernable" character, while Scott himself refers to "the family temper" as rather volcanic. The late Mr. W. B. Scott, too, considered it worth while to tell the world in his Memoirs, that, as a boy, he

once heard Scott swear profane in a printer's office. The truth of the matter seems to be that Scott had a large share of the family temper in boyhood, when he suffered from serious illnesses, and that he was capable of relapses in his overworn later years. But in the full health and vigour of his manhood, he mastered his temper admirably.

He was at Abbotsford, at Drumlanrig with the Duke of Buccleuch, and at other country houses remote from Edinburgh, in the July and August of 1813. He was disturbed by frequent letters from John Ballantyne, always at the very last moment demanding money to save the existence of the firm, and always concealing the exact state of financial affairs. John was like the proverbial spendthrift who never can be induced to give his benevolent kinsfolk a full schedule of his debts. Thus harassed and menaced with ruin, Scott wrote letters which are models of tact and temper. He only asked to be told " in plain and distinct terms " how affairs really stood, and to be told in good time. But John was as unpunctual and untrustworthy as Scott was punctual and

placable. He would not write explicitly, he always sent unexpected demands, and it was only certain that he was keeping others back. Scott had not an hour of peace and safety, and he told Ballantyne as much, "in charity with your dilatory worship." "Were it not for your strange concealments, I should anticipate no difficulty in winding up these matters." Lockhart says that he would as soon have hanged his favourite dog as turned John Ballantyne adrift. The conclusion of the matter was that the Ballantyne publishing company found a haven in the capacious bosom of Constable, who believed in the Star of Scott, advanced some £4,000, and took off the sinking ship the useless burden of the valueless books.

On the whole Scott could be patient, he knew that his copyrights and library were valuable enough to secure all his creditors from ultimate loss. But to avoid loss by the hurried sale of copyrights, he obtained a guarantee for £4,000 from his friend and chief, the Duke of Buccleuch, backed, it seems, by Messrs. Longman. At the same time he declined an offer of the Poet Laureateship—vacant by the death

of Pye—from the Prince Regent. He supposed that the Laureateship was worth three or four hundred pounds annually, a mistake. But as he held two other offices, the Clerkship and Sheriffship, he deemed it wrong to take the money, and secured the office for Southey, who lived solely by his pen. Another motive, felt by Scott and urged by the Duke of Buccleuch, was the ridicule which then was attached to the bays, and the necessity of writing a Birthday Ode every year. The Regent removed that obsolete necessity, and Southey, despite one famous error, redeemed the honour of the laurels, next held by Wordsworth, and then by Tennyson. "Sir Walter's conduct," Southey said, "was, as it always was, characteristically generous, and in the highest degree friendly."

Thus in temper, in generosity, and in determination that no man should be a loser by him, we see Scott at his best, while in the sanguine hopefulness which led him to go on buying land, books, and old armour, during the crisis, we mark the cause of his final misfortunes; and, in his ceaseless industry during these

distractions, we note the courageous perseverance by which he saved his honour at the expense of his life. Through his financial troubles he worked doggedly at his Edition and *Life of Swift*, and began *The Lord of the Isles*, though already he was the butt of every bore, and the host of tedious uninvited guests, "the thieves of time." Simultaneously, he was assisting Maturin and other literary strugglers with money, his constant practice. But he did cause the Income Tax collectors to "abandon their claim upon the produce of literary labour." Lockhart chronicles this fact "in case such a demand should ever be renewed hereafter!"

It is renewed, of course, and with perfect justice. What Scott resisted was double taxation of literary earnings, first under the property tax, next, yearly, under the Income Tax. He must not first be taxed on the full price, say, of *Marmion*, as income, and then again yearly on the interest of the price.[1]

In July 1814 the Edition and *Life of Swift*

[1] Thus, at least, I understand the point. Cf. Lockhart Iv. pp. 142–144



SIR WALTER SCOTT AND HIS FRIENDS.

From the painting by Thomas Faed, R.A.

appeared in nineteen volumes, six years after this laborious work was begun. The *Life*, which became popular, is perhaps, with that by Sir Henry Craik, the most generous and sympathetic attempt to make intelligible one of the greatest, most miserable, and most mysterious of mankind. Scott made more allowance than Thackeray for what Lockhart calls "the faults and foibles of nameless and inscrutable disease."

CHAPTER IV

The *Waverley* Novels

IT must probably have been in 1813 that Scott, hunting for some fishing tackle in an old bureau, found both the flies (they were red palmers tied on several strands of grey horse hairs), and also the manuscript of the first chapters of *Waverley*, begun in 1805 and reconsidered in 1810. The novel was advertized in *The Scots Magazine* of February, as to appear in March. But, very characteristically, Scott now dropped the novel, and gave the spring months to composing the essays on "Chivalry" and "Romance" for Constable's new purchase, *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Then, in June 1814, Lockhart, at a dinner party of young men in George Street, saw through a window of North Castle Street the writing hand "that never stops—page after page is finished and thrown on that heap of

MSS.; and still it goes on unwearied, and so it will be till candles are brought in, and God knows how long after that . . . I well know what hand that is—'tis Walter Scott's," said Lockhart's host.

Thus, in three summer weeks, Scott wrote the two last volumes of *Waverley*, the anonymous romance that began a literary revolution. Novels, of course, were written always, since the days of Richardson and Fielding and Miss Burney. But Miss Burney had long been silent: Mrs. Radcliffe had ceased to terrify and amaze, and Miss Edgeworth, in Lockhart's opinion, "had never realized a tithe of £700 by the best of her Irish tales," which Scott regarded as one source of his inspiration. Novels were in 1814 abandoned, said Morritt, to the Lydia Languishes and their maids; they were disdained by the then relatively serious members of the reading public who "formed libraries." *Waverley* came with its successors and with the swarm of imitations, and libraries were formed no more. The public, indeed, still bought the poetry of Byron with enthusiasm, but Shelley and Keats they rejected. I

doubt if there was a first edition of *Christabel*, and the reign of novels and nothing but novels began. There were interruptions to this despotism when Tennyson was in his golden prime, and when Macaulay and Froude wrote history, but to-day the Novel is supreme, and—the novels are not *Waverley* novels.

It was Scott, the greatest of readers, who inaugurated the reign of novel-reading, and very much chagrined he would be could he see the actual results: the absolute horror with which mankind shun every other study. It could never have occurred to Scott, that, within less than a hundred years, male and female novelists, often as ignorant of books as of life, would monopolize the general attention, and would give themselves out as authorities on politics, philosophy, ethics, society, theology, religion, and Homeric criticism. Scott's own tales never usurped the office of the pulpit, the platform, or the Press; and, if he did teach some readers all the history that they knew, he constantly warned them that, in his romances, he was an historian with a very large poetical licence.

No sooner had Scott read the proof-sheets of *Waverley* than he sailed from Leith (July 28, 1814) with a festal crew of friends, including Erskine, on board the Lighthouse yacht. The Surveyor, Viceroy of the jolly Commissioners of Lighthouses, was the ancestor of Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson, "a most gentlemanlike and modest man and well-known for his scientific skill," writes Scott in his *Diary*. That he kept a very copious diary on a pleasure voyage is an example of his indomitable habit of writing, unfatigued by the production of two volumes of a novel in three weeks. He visited the ruined abbey of Arbroath, once held by Cardinal Beaton, "for the third time, the first being—*eheu!*" On the first visit he had been in the company of his unforgotten love: to be absent from her, and divided from her by the river of death, was not to be out of mind of her. He studied the strange ways of the Shetland and Orkney islanders—we see the results in *The Pirate*; he examined the extraordinary towers of the fourth to ninth centuries A.D. called *Brochs*; he took notes of a superstitious practice which strongly resembles an usage of

the natives of Central Australia : he heard of the great sea serpent's recent visit to the coast, and he was presented with a collection of neolithic axe heads. He met a witch of great age who sold, as Æolus in the *Odyssey* gave, favourable breezes to seamen. He visited many island scenes of the distresses of Prince Charles, in 1746, and at Dunvegan saw the Fairy Flag of M'Leod, and heard M'Crimmon's Lament played by a descendant of the M'Crimmon who was the only man slain in the rout of the M'Leods at Moy. He beheld Loch Coruisk —admirably described in *The Lord of the Isles*— and the ruins of Ardtornish Castle, in which occurs the opening scene of that poem. On September 4, he was saddened by news of the death of one of his dearest friends, the Duchess of Buccleuch, and, on September 8, left the yacht for Glasgow.

In Edinburgh, on his way to Abbotsford, Scott found Constable about to publish the third edition of *Waverley*—three thousand copies, at a guinea, had already been disposed of, or were in the way of disappearing. This was at that time an unexampled success for a

new and anonymous novel, unbacked by the favouring breezes of the modern puff preliminary. The book, uncut and in three grey-clad volumes, is now esteemed at a very high rate by bibliomaniacs. In most cases, purchasers had the novels "murderously half-bound in calf," and much cut down; and, of *Waverley* in particular, copies of the first edition are seldom found in the original state. Constable had refused to give £1,000 for the whole copyright, and rather ruefully divided the large profits with the author.

At first only three people were in Scott's confidence as to the authorship of *Waverley*: they were Ballantyne, Erskine and Morritt. Gradually, as the novels flowed on and on, about twenty persons were entrusted with the secret, which could be no real secret to any one of sense who had read the poems and the notes to the poems. As for Scott's intimates, they recognized him in dozens of details and traces. But the public, not unnaturally, wished to believe that they had a new entertainer. Thomas Scott, Jeffrey (of all people !), Erskine, and a clergyman who lay under a very black

cloud, were among the persons suspected of the authorship.

It was vain to say that only Scott knew so much of Highlands and Lowlands as the author knew : that no other man had his acquaintance with the personal side of old history, that no other could have written the snatches of verse in the romances. People enjoy a mystery, and Scott enjoyed mystifying them, while his conscience permitted him a latitude in denial warranted by the maxims of Father Holt, S.J., in *Esmond*. As a loyal citizen might blamelessly say that King Charles was *not* in the oak tree—His Majesty being private there, and invisible to loyal eyes—so Scott, if pressed, averred that he had no hand in the novels, often adding that, even if he had, he would still deny his authorship.

Casuists may blame or exonerate him (Cardinal Newman discussed the situation): it is certain that no man is bound to incriminate himself.

Jeffrey detected Scott, of course, and reviewed him with the usual grotesque assumption of superiority. *O le grand homme, rien ne*

peut lui plaire! The *Quarterly* dullard probably did not recognize Scott's hand, and spoke of the Scots tongue as "a dark dialogue" (so in Lockhart!) "of Anglified Erse," a deathless exhibition of stupid ignorance.

The general characteristics, the merits and defects of the *Waverley* novels may be reviewed, before we approach the history of each example in its turn. In an age when an acquaintance with Fitzgerald's *Rubáiyát* of Omar Kháyyám, an exhaustive ignorance of all literature of the past, and an especial contempt for Scott, whom Fitzgerald so intensely admired, are the equipment of many critics, we must be very cautious in praising the *Waverley* novels. They are not the work of a passionate, a squalid, or a totally uneducated genius. They are not the work of any Peeping Tom who studies woman in her dressing-room, and tries to spy or smell out the secrets of the eternally feminine. We have novels to-day—novels by males—full of clever spyings and dissections of womankind, which Scott would have thrown into the fire. "I think," writes Mr. Hutton, "that the deficiency of his pictures of women . . . should

be greatly attributed to his natural chivalry. . . . He hardly ventured, as it were, in his tenderness for them, to look deeply into their little weaknesses and intricacies of character."

Scott's novels, again, are not the work of a man who desires to enforce his social, or religious, or political ideals and ideas in his romances. Like almost all great novels, except *Tom Jones*, they do not possess carefully elaborated plots, any more than do most of the dramas of Shakespeare. They are far from being the work of a conscientious stylist, beating his brains for hours to find *le mot propre*, usually the least natural word for any mortal to use in the circumstances. But once Scott *did* hunt for *le mot propre*, in Scots. He could not find it, and came out to the lawn at Abbotsford where some workmen were engaged. He turned a bucket upside down, and asked the men, "What did I do just now?" "Ye *whummled* the bowie," said the men, and Scott had found the word he wanted—to "whummle." Mr. Saintsbury has a little excursus on this word, "whummle," or "whammle," which Scott, he has heard, picked

up from a woman in the street. But every Scot knows it, for to "whummle the bannock," in the presence of a Menteith, was a proverbial insult, as Menteith, or one of his men, is said, by whummling the loaf, to have given the signal of betrayal, when English soldiers lay in wait before seizing Sir William Wallace.

Far from being a conscientious stylist, Scott not infrequently proves the truth of his own remark to Lockhart, that he never learned grammar. I have found five "whiches" in a sentence of his, and five "*ques*" in a sentence by Alexandre Dumas, his pupil and rival. Dumas had more of the humour of Scott than Scott had of the wit of Dumas. Many parts of his tales are prolix: his openings, as a rule, are dull. His heroes and heroines often speak in the stilted manner of Miss Burney's Lord Orville, a manner (if we may trust memoirs and books like Boswell's *Johnson*, and Walpole's *Letters*), in which no men and women of mould ever did talk, even in the eighteenth century. But Catherine Glover, in *The Fair Maid of Perth*, usually speaks from stilts. These pompous discourses in which the speaker often

talks of himself in the third person, were in vogue, in novel writing, we do not know why, and they are a stone of stumbling to readers who do not blench when a modern hero mouths fustian in the tone of a demoniac at large. All these unfashionable traits are to be found up and down the *Waverley* novels, combined with descriptive passages that, to some, are a weariness. These are frank confessions from a zealot who has read most of the *Waverley* novels many times, from childhood up to age, and finds them better, finds fresh beauties in them, every time that he reads them. But there are more serious defects than old-fashionedness, and prolixities (which may be skipped), and laxity of style, and errors in grammar. There are faults in "artistry," and nobody knew them better, or put his finger on them more ruthlessly, or apologized for them more ingenuously than Scott himself.

The Introductions to the Novels have frightened away many a painful would-be student who has been told that, if you read a book, you must read every line of it—from cover to cover. This is an old moral maxim invented and

handed on by the class of mortals who are not born readers, and regard literature with moral earnestness as a duty, though a painful duty. There must be no flinching! Scott, like Dr. Johnson, "tore the heart out of a book," rapidly assimilating what he needed, and "skipping" what he did not need. He wrote his Introductions for the curious literary student, not for the novel reader and the general public. Doubtless he expected the general public to skip the Introductions, and did not reflect that they would trouble persons who adhere to the puritanic rule against what they call "desultory reading." But whosoever has any interest in Scott's own theory of the conduct of the historical novel, and in his confession of his own faults, cannot afford to overlook the original Introduction of 1822 to *The Fortunes of Nigel*. In these pages Captain Clutterbuck describes an interview with "The Eidolon, or representative vision of The Author of *Waverley*." Scott, in fact, anticipates the modern "interview," but he interviews himself, and does the business better than the suave modern reporter. After confessing that

The Monastery, especially the White Lady of Avenel, is rather a failure, Scott is asked by Captain Clutterbuck whether his new book meets every single demand of the critics, whether it opens strikingly, proceeds naturally, and ends happily, for critics then applauded what they now denounce—"a happy ending." Scott replies that Hercules might produce a romance "which should glide, and gush, and never pause, and widen, and deepen, and all the rest on't," but that he cannot. "There never was a novel written on this plan while the world stood." "Pardon me—*Tom Jones*," says the Captain. There was also the *Odyssey*, on which Wolf, the great sceptic as to the unity of the *Iliad*, bestowed the praise of masterly composition which the Captain gives to *Tom Jones*. But several modern German critics and Father Browne of the Society of Jesus, assure us that the plot of the *Odyssey* is a very bad piece of composition, a dawdling bit of patchwork by many hands, in many ages, strung together by a relatively late Greek "botcher," though why he took the trouble nobody can imagine. Thus do critical opinions

differ, and a fair critic informs me that "*Tom Jones* is the stupidest book in the English language." Yet, if the *Odyssey* triumphed over the Zoili of three thousand years, while *Tom Jones* was an undisputed masterpiece for a century and a half, we may doubt whether the verdict of time and of the world is to be upset for ever by the censures of a few moderns. To them, and to the contemners of Scott, we may say, as Cromwell said to the Commissioners of the General Assembly, "Brethren, in the bowels of Christ, believe that it is possible you may be mistaken." Scott remarks that, in Fielding's masterpiece, the Novel, for excellence of composition, "challenged a comparison with the Epic." Other "great masters," like Smollett and Le Sage, "have been satisfied if they amuse the reader on the road." It is enough for himself if his "scenes, unlaboured and loosely put together, have sufficient interest in them to amuse in one corner the pain of the body; in another to relieve anxiety of mind; in a third place to unwrinkle a brow bent with the furrows of daily toil; in another to fill the place of bad thoughts, or to suggest better;

in yet another to induce an idler to study the history of his country; in all . . . to furnish harmless amusement."

Such is Scott's reply, in anticipation, to the censure of Carlyle, that he has not a message, and a mission, and so forth. His mission was to add enormously to human happiness: his message was that of honour, courage, endurance, love, and kindness. The Captain, however, doubts not that the new book needs an apology, and that the story "is hastily huddled up,"—a favourite criticism of Scott's friend, Lady Louisa Stewart. Scott might have replied that his romances are not so hastily "huddled up" at the close as many of Shakespeare's plays.

But it is curious that Hogg represents Scott as criticising *his* tales exactly as Captain Clutterbuck and Lady Louisa censured Scott's own romances.

"Well, Mr. Hogg, I have read over your proofs with a great deal of pleasure, and, I confess, with some little portion of dread. In the first place, the meeting of the two princesses at Castle Weiry is excellent. I have not

seen any modern thing more truly dramatic. The characters are strongly marked, old Peter Chisholme's in particular. Ah! man, what you might have made of that with a little more refinement, care, and patience! But it is always the same with you, just hurrying on from one vagary to another, without consistency or proper arrangement."

"Dear Mr. Scott, a man canna do the thing that he canna do."

"Yes, but you *can* do it. Witness your poems, where the arrangements are all perfect and complete; but in your prose works, with the exception of a few short tales, you seem to write merely by random, without once considering what you are going to write about."

"You are not often wrong, Mr. Scott, and you were never righter in your life than you are now, for when I write the first line of a tale or novel, I know not what the second is to be, and it is the same way in every sentence throughout. When my tale is traditionary, the work is easy, as I then see my way before me, though the tradition be ever so short, but in all my prose works of imagination, knowing

little of the world, I sail on without star or compass."

In the conversation with the Captain, Scott presently shows that, as regards composition, the Sheriff and the Shepherd sailed in the same rudderless boat. "You should take time at least to arrange your story," says the Captain. Scott replies, as Hogg replied to himself, that "A man canna do what he canna do."

"That is a sore point with me, my son. Believe me, I have not been fool enough to neglect ordinary precautions. I have repeatedly laid down my future work to scale, divided it into volumes and chapters, and endeavoured to construct a story which I meant would evolve itself gradually and strikingly, maintain suspense, and stimulate curiosity; and which, finally, should terminate in a striking catastrophe. But I think there is a demon who seats himself on the feather of my pen when I begin to write, and leads it astray from the purpose. Characters expand under my hand; incidents are multiplied; the story lingers, while the materials increase; my regular

mansion turns out a Gothic anomaly, and the work is closed long before I have attained the point I proposed.

"*Captain.*—Resolution and determined forbearance might remedy that evil.

"*Author.*—Alas! my dear sir, you do not know the force of paternal affection. When I light on such a character as Bailie Jarvie, or Dalgetty, my imagination brightens, and my conception becomes clearer at every step which I take in his company, although it leads me many a weary mile away from the regular road, and forces me to leap hedge and ditch to get back into the route again. If I resist the temptation, as you advise me, my thoughts become prosy, flat, and dull; I write painfully to myself, and under a consciousness of flagging which makes me flag still more; the sunshine with which fancy had invested the incidents, departs from them, and leaves every thing dull and gloomy. I am no more the same author I was in my better mood, than the dog in a wheel, condemned to go round and round for hours, is like the same dog merrily chasing his own tail, and gambolling in all the frolic of un-

restrained freedom. In short, sir, on such occasions, I think I am bewitched."

Scott next professes that he cannot write plays, as the Captain urges him to do, if he would. The applauded scraps of "Old Play" which head many of his chapters, are borrowed from manuscript dramas about which he tells a fable. As to the charge of making money—

> *O, if it were a mean thing,*
> *The Gentles would not use it;*
> *And if it were ungodly,*
> *The clergy would refuse it.*

Moreover, "No man of honour, genius, or spirit, would make the mere love of gain, the chief, far less the only, purpose of his labours. For myself, I am not displeased to find the game a winning one; yet while I pleased the public, I should probably continue it merely for the pleasure of playing; for I have felt as strongly as most folks that love of composition, which is perhaps the strongest of all instincts, driving the author to the pen, the painter to the palette, often without either the chance of fame or the prospect of reward. Perhaps I have said too much of this."

Such is Scott's confession and apology. To plan a work to scale, to pursue a predetermined course, does not "set his genius," as Alan Breck says. Nor did it set the genius of an artist so conscientious as Alan's creator, Mr. Stevenson. The prearranged programme or *scenario* of his *Kidnapped*, was very unlike the actual romance as it stands. The pre-eminent merit of Scott was that of a creator of characters. These personages became living, and, because they were living, spontaneous and uncontrollable. What began as a "Legend of Montrose," left the great Marquis in the background, and became the Odyssey of Thackeray's favourite, Dugald Dalgetty, "of Drumthwacket that should be," that inimitable and immortal man of the sword. So it is throughout the *Waverley* novels. The characters *will* "gang their ain gait." They come across the author's fancy, as Mrs. Gamp, who had no part in the original plan of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, came across the fancy of Dickens, and they work their will on plot and author. In fact, the almost mechanical merit of construction or *charpentage* is

rarely found in the great novels of the great masters. *Vanity Fair* "has no outline," as Mr. Mantalini says of the lady of rank, and, if *Pendennis* "has an outline, it is a demned outline." Of *Esmond* the motto may hold good—

Servetur ad imum
Qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.

But this merit, from the days of Cervantes downwards, has been the least sought after by the greatest novelists. Scott tells us that at night he would leave off writing without an idea as to how he was to get his characters out of a quandary, and that, in the half-hour after waking, all would become clear to him. Charlotte Bronte makes a similar confession. In his manuscript, Scott never goes back to delete and alter—better would it have been had he taken the trouble. But his proof-sheets show that he took a good deal of pains in adding and improving, especially in that impeccable little *chef d'oeuvre*, "Wandering Willie's Tale" in *Redgauntlet*. We are thus obliged to confess that he was on occasion culpably indolent. Mr. Stevenson cites a

romantic passage of *Guy Mannering* in which Scott, rather than go back and indicate, in an earlier passage, the presence of a fountain which he suddenly finds that he needs, hurries forward and drags the fountain into a long, trailing, shapeless sentence. *Guy Mannering*, we know, was "written in six weeks at Christmas," for the purpose of "refreshing the machine." Undeniably it would be better, good as it is, had a fortnight been given to revision.

Scott's "architectonic," his principles in the composition of historical novels, are well known, and the method was all his own. Others before him had attempted the historical novel, but wholly without his knowledge of history, and of the actual way of living and thinking in various periods of the past. He first made the dry bones of history live, and Macaulay and Froude follow his method, perhaps rather too closely. Several of Mr. Froude's most dramatic scenes never, as a matter of fact, occurred. It is probable that a too hasty glance at notes from original documents misled him, and his dramatic instinct did the rest, without a backward look at the

original papers, a look which would have made re-writing necessary—and caused the dramatic situation to disappear! Scott, of course, wrote novels under no historical trammels of accuracy. He deliberately committed the most glaring anachronisms, bringing the dead Amy Robsart to life long after her mysterious death, introducing Shakespeare as a successful dramatist at an age when he was creeping unwillingly to school—and then Scott would confess his anachronisms in a note. Modern historical novelists, though they write from the results of "cram," and not from a mind already charged with history, try at least to subject themselves to the actual circumstances of the past, and not to subject historical circumstances to themselves. They dare not bring Charles II to Woodstock, in his flight after Worcester, because it is too well known that the King did not make by way of Woodstock for the south coast. On such points of composition, Scott was as reckless as Turner was in landscape; both were satisfied, as the reader usually is, if they got their effects. Mr. Swinburne, in his drama of *Mary Stuart*,

is not more nice. Lady Boyne (Mary Beaton), was never near Mary Stuart in England, though a play turns on her presence there.

Scott's plan was never to make a famous character of history the central personage of his tale. Thus he never could have written a novel of which the fortunes of Mary Stuart were the central interest. He deemed that the facts were too well known to be trifled with, and that, in such matters, romance could not cope with actuality. Thus the unhappy Queen appears as a subordinate character—not as heroine, that is to say—while, in the scene in which the night of Darnley's murder is recalled to her memory, she reaches the height of tragedy. These two principles, not to make the protagonists of history his central characters; not to cope with the records of actual events, are the guiding, if negative principles of Scott. He invents heroes and heroines who never existed, nor could have existed. There could be no Henry Morton in 1679! He uses them mainly as pivots round which the characters revolve. The heroes and

heroines themselves, as a rule, interest their creator, and his readers, but little. What can you make of a *jeune premier?* He must be brave, modest, handsome, good, and not too clever—an ideal son-in-law, and he must be a true lover. Scott pronounced his earliest hero, Edward Waverley, "a sneaking piece of imbecility. . . . I am a bad hand at depicting a hero properly so-called." True, but what kind of hero is Martin Chuzzlewit, or Clive Newcome, and is there any hero at all in *Vanity Fair*? Tom Jones and Captain Booth take leading parts, but are nothing less than heroic. They are *characters*, however, and Scott's heroes, except Quentin Durward, Roland Graeme, Harry Gow, and the Master of Ravenswood (*un beau ténébreux*), are not of much account as characters.

Unlike Thackeray, Dickens, and possibly Fielding, Scott never drew his hero from himself. In politics they are usually what he was—*when he wrote history*—they take the middle path, they are in the sober *juste milieu*. Waverley is only a Jacobite to please his lady; Henry Morton is an extremely moderate constitu-

tional Whig. Nobody can take much interest in Vanbeest Brown, the wandering heir of *Guy Mannering*, despite his proficiency on the flageolet. When we have a true hero like Montrose, we are scarcely allowed to look on his face and hear his voice. Ivanhoe, like an honourable gentleman, curbs his passion for Rebecca, and is true to Rowena, though we see that the memory of Rebecca never leaves his heart. Ivanhoe behaves as, in his circumstances, Scott would have behaved, in place of giving way to passion. Novels of the most poignant interest are constantly beginning, in private life, and then break off, because the living characters are persons of honour and self control. *Ivanhoe* would have been more to the taste of to-day, if the hero had eloped with the fair Hebrew—but then, Ivanhoe and Rowena are persons of honour and self-control. I found, in Scott's papers, a letter from an enthusiastic schoolboy, a stranger—"Oh, Sir Walter, how *could* you kill the gallant cavalier, and give the lady to the crop-eared Whig?" This was the remark of the natural man. Scott kept the natural man in sub-

jection. The heroes, except when they are "bonny fechters" like Harry Gow, Roland Graeme, and Quentin Durward—that canny soldier of fortune—are little more than parts of the machinery, and modes of introducing the pell-mell of nominally subordinate, but really essential characters of all ranks and degrees—the undying friends with whom Scott brings us acquainted.

The heroines, though it seems a paradox to say so, are really more successful than the heroes. In *The Heart of Midlothian* there is no hero except the heroine, Jeanie Deans, certainly one of the great creations of literature. Scott has made goodness without beauty, without overmastering tragedy, without "wallowing naked in the pathetic," and without passion, as interesting as Becky Sharp. Who has rivalled this feat? Rose Bradwardine, with her innocent self-betrayed affection, is an elder sister of Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*. Though rather stilted, in the manner of the period, Rebecca is a noble creature. Catherine Seyton, of *The Abbot*, is a delightfully spirited girl, and Diana Vernon is peerless.

Our hearts warm even to the prematurely puritan Fair Maid of Perth, when she runs, with loose hair, like a wild creature, to her lover's door, on the false news of his death. Fair eyes were wont to weep over Lucy Ashton, the Ophelia of Scott; but now Lucy is out of fashion though her end, surely, is poignant enough, when the weak mind is broken, and the animal stands at bay, like a wild cat, and breaks the hunter's toils, and dies a maiden in the bridal chamber.

As Molière never had the heart to draw a jealous woman, among all his pictures of men who knew, like himself, the torments of jealousy, so Scott never had the heart to draw a young and beautiful woman who is wicked. This ancient familiar source of poignant interest he passes by, out of his great chivalry. There was nothing to prevent him from writing a romance on the passionate, wretched tale of the once beautiful Ulrica, in Ivanhoe, a fair traitress driven on the winds of revenge, treachery, parricide, and incest. Here was a theme for a "realistic" novel of England after

the Conquest, but Scott sketches it lightly, as a Thyestean horror in the background. In his work such a piece of "realism" stands alone, like the story of Phoenix in Homer's work (in the Ninth Book of the *Iliad*). Both artists, Scott and Homer, had a sense of reverence of human things: they did not lack the imagination necessary for the portrayal of the evil and terrible, but they did not seek success in that popular region. Scott was no prude, but he held the young in reverence, knowing that among them he must have many readers.

I am unable to think the worse of him because he imposed on himself limitations which Byron triumphantly broke through, though Scott's limits now militate against a high appreciation of his work by the admirers of M. Guy de Maupassant and M. Catulle Mendès. "A man canna do what he canna do," and Scott could not have treated the favourite themes of these masters, if he would. He had funds enough to draw upon in human life and character, without hunting for personages and situations in dark malodorous corners. The glory of his work is, of course, not merely

his wealth of incident, and his natural gift of story telling, but his crowd of characters, from his princes, such as James VI, an immortal picture, Louis XI, Elizabeth, Mary, Charles II in flight or in such prosperity as he loved, to his Highland chiefs, his ploughmen, his lairds, Bucklaw and old Redgauntlet, the persecutor; his copper captains in Alsatia, his baillies, his Covenanting preachers, his Claverhouse, his serving men, his Andrew Fairservice, his yeomen, his Dandie Dinmont, with the Dinmont family and terriers, his wild women, Meg Merrilees, and Madge Wildfire; his smugglers, his lawyers, from Pleydell to the elder Fairford, and even his bores, who, like Miss Austen's bores, are certainly too much with us, who can number the throng of such characters, all living and delightful? The novels are *vécus*: the author has, in imagination, lived closely and long with his people, whether of his own day, or of the past, before he laid brush to canvas to execute their portraits. It is in this capacity, as a creator of a vast throng of living people of every grade, and every variety of nature, humour, and temperament, that Scott,

among British writers, is least remote from Shakespeare. No changes in taste and fashion as regards matters unessential, no laxities and indolence of his own, no feather-headed folly, or leaden stupidity of new generations can deprive Scott of these unfading laurels. The novels that charmed Europe and America, that were the inspiration of Dumas, that have been affectionately discussed by the greatest of modern British statesmen, were as conspicuously open to criticism, and were as severely handled by reviewers, in Scott's own day as in our own. But, if we may judge by endless new editions of all sorts, and at various prices, the *Waverley* novels are not less popular now, than are, for their little span, the most successful flights of all-daring ignorance and bombastic presumption. It was on his characters, especially on his characters sketched among his own people, that Scott believed the interest of his romances to depend. He generously recognized Miss Edgeworth as his teacher: "If I could but hit Miss Edgeworth's wonderful power of vivifying all her persons, and making them live as *beings* in your mind, I should not despair," he said.



THE CHANTREY BUST OF SIR WALTER SCOTT, 1820.

Meanwhile, outside of "the big bow wow" line, he regarded Miss Austen as his superior, nor was he wrong; that queen of fiction has come to her own again. In his brief, and on the whole admirable, *Scott*, the late Mr. Hutton defended Scott's power of character-drawing better than I can hope to do, if it needs defence, against Mr. Carlyle, who had some slight private bitterness against Sir Walter, on a matter of an unanswered letter. He calls Scott's men and women "little more than mechanical cases, deceptively painted automatons." This is the Carlyle who conceded to Cardinal Newman the possession of intellectual powers equivalent to those of a rabbit; *un vrai lapin!* Scott "fashions his characters from the skin inwards, never getting near the heart of them." Never near the broken stoical heart of Saunders Mucklebackit; of the fallen Bradwardine, happy in unsullied honour; never near the heart of the maddened Peter Peebles; never near the flawless Christian heart of Bessie M'Clure; or the heart of dauntless remorse of Nancy Ewart; or the heart of sacrificed love in Diana Vernon; or the stout heart of Dalgetty in the dungeon of

Inveraray; or the secret soul of Mary Stuart, revealed when she is reminded of Bastian's bridal mask, and the deed of Kirk o' Field? *Quid plura*, Thomas Carlyle wrote splenetic nonsense: "he was very capable of having it happen to him."

CHAPTER V

Guy Mannering to *Kenilworth*

"WAVERLEY" is not, perhaps, the novel with which one would recommend a person anxious to find out whether or not Sir Walter can still be read, to begin his studies. The six chapters written in 1805 are prolix and unnecessary. A modern narrator would commence with Chapter VIII. "It was about noon when Captain Waverley entered the straggling village or rather hamlet of Tully Veolan," and would find easy means of enlightening us as to who Captain Waverley was. One sentence in the long preliminary account of the hero refers to Scott himself. "He would exercise for hours that internal sorcery, by which past or imaginary scenes are presented, in action as it were, to the eyes of the muser." Like

Dickens and Thackeray, Scott was a natural "visualizer," seeing in his mind's eye the aspects of his characters, and hearing their voices. Perhaps there is no poetic genius without this gift, which Mr. Galton has found almost absent among, and unknown to men of science, though the presence of the power of visualization by no means implies that it is accompanied by genius. Scott's friends did not conceal from him that they were little interested in his tale, before they entered the village and château of Tully Veolan. From that point all was new to most of them, while no romance of the Forty-Five, a theme now so hackneyed, or of Highland life and manners at the date of Sixty Years Since had ever been offered to the world. Indeed the death of the last of the male line of Stuart was almost contemporary with the year in which Scott began his romance, and while there remained a shadowy King over the water, a Jacobite romance might seem a thing in doubtful taste. We cannot, after a century, feel the absolute freshness of impression which the novel made on contemporary readers.

We know, in one way or another, all that can be said about Highland and Lowland life in 1745, and there are passages of *Waverley* in which we are almost reminded of Bekker's *Charicles*, and other instructive pictures of classical manners. Scott, of course, was accused of "slandering the Highlanders," because he described the cattle stealings which, as contemporaries assert, were regularly organized by the furtive genius of Macdonnell of Barisdale, with intermediaries among the broken clan of the Macgregors, and the less reputable of the dwellers in Rannoch. The relations of Cluny Macpherson with the independent Highland companies had been not unlike those of Fergus MacIvor, a chief quite as much impelled by personal ambition, and the promise of a Jacobite earldom (Lovat was to be a duke, Glengarry an earl), as by any disinterested devotion to the White Rose. There were chiefs like Lochiel, as there were Lowlanders like the Oliphants of Gask, who fought purely for the sake of honour and devotion. The mass of the Jacobite clansmen were notoriously as loyal as steel to their Prince. But there are

black sheep in every flock. "There is something," says Scott, "in the severe judgment passed on my countrymen, that if they do not prefer Scotland to truth, they will always prefer it to inquiry." Scott preferred inquiry, and gave us the results in Callum Beg and in the darker side of the character of Fergus MacIvor, which irritated some of the fiery Celts. Fergus redeems himself by the courage of his end, but the favourite characters of the novel are, as usual, the subordinates, that gallant, prosy, honourable pedant, the Baron Bradwardine, Davy Gellatly with his songs, Balmawhapple, Baillie Macwheeble, Evan Dhu Maccombich, the Gifted Gilfillan, the Prince himself, and how many others! The pictures of Holyrood and the Prince's Court, of the rout of Prestonpans, and the march into England, are as brilliant as they then were unhackneyed, and though *Waverley* is not the best of the series of novels, it made an excellent beginning.

Meanwhile stern necessity urged Scott to that grinding of verses, *invita Minerva*, to which he said that "*the peine forte et dure* is

nothing in comparison," and his mood was "devilish repulsive" to the task of working on *The Lord of the Isles*. So he wrote the last three cantos in five weeks, and set out for Abbotsford to "refresh the machine" by writing *Guy Mannering* in six! He had only gleaned the story of the Astrologer on November 7, from Mr. Train, and between that date and some time in February 1815, he had finished both *The Lord of the Isles* and the novel of *The Astrologer*. He announced to Mr. Morritt at once that "*The Lord of the Isles* closes my poetic labours upon an extended scale," this before the book proved not quite satisfactory to the public. He was wont to say that he abandoned poetry "on an extended scale" because Byron "beat" him, but he was now forty-five, was confessedly weary of "grinding verses," and had found an easier, a more congenial, and a more lucrative form of work, one which suited his genius better, and was of a more permanent appeal than the romance in verse. Since his time, setting apart the temporary vogue of Byron's *Giaours* and *Laras*, rhymed romances on Oriental

themes, the world has steadily declined to read long narrative poems. Mr. William Morris alone, for a while, won some readers back to his peculiar form of this genre. In *The Lord of the Isles* we remember little but the Battle of Bannockburn, which has all the fiery energy of Scott in his Homeric mood, and makes a fit pendant to his Flodden Field. Though Scott, before he learned from Ballantyne that the book was a comparative failure, had meant to abandon rhymed romances, he was a little damped by knowledge of the fact, and, pointing to *The Giaour*, which Byron had sent to him, he remarked, "James, Byron hits the mark where I don't even pretend to fledge my arrow." Says Lockhart, "he always appeared to me quite blind to the fact that in *The Giaours*, in *The Bride of Abydos*, in *Parisina*, and indeed in all his early serious narratives, Byron owed at least half his success to clever though perhaps unconscious imitation of, Scott." He also owed much to his Oriental themes, to the vogue of his beauty and life of adventure, and to his fluttering of the dovecotes of propriety. Byron spoke as generously

of Scott as Scott did of Byron: neither felt for the other the indifference of Wordsworth nor the contempt of Coleridge. In contact with Scott all that is finest in Byron's character glows like the diamond in the presence of radium.

Guy Mannering made up for Scott's disappointment. His advisers, from the first, deemed it "more interesting" than *Waverley*, perhaps because it dealt with their own times and manners, for the topic is not in itself nearly so rich in romance. The strength of the book is in the characters, the donnert good humoured laird, that customary villain, the attorney, the smugglers, the gipsies, Meg Merrilees, honest Dandie Dinmont, and the lawyers whether at high jinks or in more sober mood, while the scene of the old maid's funeral and the reading of her will cannot be surpassed. Dominie Sampson was a great favourite, though a sample of "Scott's bores," and too apt to return like a refrain, with his peculiarities, in the manner of some of Dickens's characters.

Scott went up to London with his laurels

fresh, and met Byron; the pair, in Homeric fashion, exchanged gifts, Scott offering a gold-hilted Oriental dagger, and Byron a silver vase, containing the dust of Athenian men of old. Scott remarked in Byron a trait of Rousseau's, starts of suspicion, when he seemed to pause and consider whether there had not been a secret, and perhaps offensive, meaning in something casually said to him. At times he was "almost gloomy," and, in short, he must have been "gey ill to live with." But Scott quietly allowed the black dog to leave his shoulder, and consoled himself with the less perilous gaieties of the Prince Regent. Scott always denied the story that the Prince asked him point blank whether he was the author of *Waverley*. The Duke of York, however, said "my brother went rather too near the wind about *Waverley*, but nobody could have turned the thing more prettily than Walter Scott did." In fact his reply sailed as near the wind as the insinuation of the Prince.

The news of Waterloo, the triumph of his nation, allured Scott to the scene of the battle. He left London for the Continent a month

after the fight. His expenses and more were paid by *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, journal letters written to the Abbotsford circle. These contain so perfect a picture of the man at this juncture that, if people had time to read Lockhart's *Life* of him, the book might well be added to it as a supplementary volume of autobiography. Scott's enthusiasm for the national victory did not swallow up his observation of every trait of foreign life, or his excitement over "the tiniest relics of feudal antiquity." He saw the battlefield under the guidance of Costar, the peasant who, according to his own account, accompanied Napoleon, a point on which there were sceptics.

Already the British myth of the battle was current, and is reported by Scott in a letter to the Duke of Buccleuch. The legend was that the Prussian fire was not heard, nor did the Prussian columns appear from within the woods, till the moment when a part of the French Imperial Guard made the last attack on our position. Now the Prussians really made themselves felt on the French right about

four or half-past four o'clock, and three hours were occupied by them in furious fighting at Planchenoit, while the French captured La Haye Sainte on our front; and the Prussians, in reinforcements constantly coming up, were doing the business on the French right, and beginning to menace the French rear, when the last charge by a portion of their Guard was made and failed. Scott understands all this in his *Life of Napoleon*, though even there he does not quite make clear the length and severity of the Prussian task. But even British officers engaged at Waterloo seem to have gravely misconceived the magnitude of Blücher's share in the victory.

"France is not, and cannot be crushed," said Scott, and, in 1815, he foresaw the Orleanist conspiracy of fifteen years, and the fall of the Bourbons. On meeting the Duke of Wellington he felt those emotions of awe which he attributes to Roland Graeme in the presence of the Regent Moray, "the eminent soldier and statesman, the wielder of a nation's power, and the leader of its armies." "To have done things worthy to be written was, in

his eyes, a dignity to which no man had made any approach, who had only written things worthy to be read." The gallant Wolfe expressed the converse opinion, when he recited Gray's *Elegy* in the boat, on the way to the capture of Quebec, and to his death, Scott's belief in doing as far superior to writing, embraced the achievements of peace as well as of war. He " betrayed painful uneasiness when his works were alluded to as reflecting honour on the age that had produced Watt's improvement of the steam engine, and the safety lamp of Sir Humphry Davy." In brief, Scott was a born man of action, and only the accident of his lameness prevented him from being the mate of Hill and Picton in the field, and perhaps the rival of Napier as the historian of warfare. That gift of seeing with the mind's eye, which was noted in Wellington as well as in Napoleon, would have served his purposes as a general.

He came home, with presents for all the people on his estate, and with that poem of *Waterloo* which was the subject of amusing banter,

None, by sabre or by shot,
Fell half so flat as Walter Scott.

The emendations made by John Ballantyne on the proof sheets of this effort show considerable intelligence and taste, and in several cases were approved of and accepted by the author, though he once said that he was "the Black Brunswicker of literature who neither took nor gave criticism." In fact he took rather too much, in some cases, as in *St. Ronan's Well*, altered and spoiled to please the prudery of James Ballantyne. The profits of the first edition of *Waterloo* went to the fund for the widows and orphans of soldiers. By December 1815, *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk* were published, and the "sweet heathen of Monkbarns," *The Antiquary*, was in hand.

In this novel Scott wrote of his own day, and with one or two old friends, was himself the composite model for *The Antiquary*. As usual, the reader cares not much for Lovel and his lady, Miss Wardour, but the humour of the portraits of the sturdy Whig antiquary, his sense, and his foibles, and of his rival and friend the foolish Tory, Sir Arthur Wardour,

are perennially delightful. Perhaps only archæological amateurs can thoroughly appreciate the learning of which Monkbarns is so profuse, and this, no doubt, is a drawback to the popularity of the tale. The charlatan, Dousterswivel, is in a rather forced vein of humour, but the figures of Edie Ochiltree, of the gossips in the village post-office, of the barber, and all the country folk, with the incident of the escape from the rising tide, and the romance of Elspeth of the Burnfoot and the stoicism of Mucklebackit, are, in their various ways, examples of Scott at his very best, while the ballad of the Red Harlaw stands absolutely alone, far above all modern attempts to imitate ancient popular *Volkslieder*.

Now haud your tongue, baith wife and carle,
And listen, great and sma',
And I will sing of Glenallan's Earl
That fought on the red Harlaw.

The cronach's cried on Bennachie,
And doun the Don and a',
And hieland and lawland may mournfu' be
For the sair field of Harlaw.

They saddled a hundred milk-white steeds,
They hae bridled a hundred black,
With a chafron of steel on each horse's head,
And a good knight upon his back.

They hadna ridden a mile, a mile,
A mile, but barely ten,
When Donald came branking down the brae
Wi' twenty thousand men.

Their tartans they were waving wide,
Their glaives were glancing clear,
The pibrochs rung frae side to side,
Would deafen ye to hear.

The great Earl in his stirrups stood
That Highland host to see;
"Now here a knight that's stout and good
May prove a jeopardie:

"What wouldst thou do, my squire so gay,
That rides beside my reyne,
Were ye Glenallan's Earl the day,
And I were Roland Cheyne?

"To turn the rein were sin and shame,
To fight were wondrous peril,
What would ye do now, Roland Cheyne,
Were ye Glenallan's Earl?"

"Were I Glenallan's Earl this tide
And ye were Roland Cheyne,
The spur should be in my horse's side,
And the bridle upon his mane.

"If they hae twenty thousand blades,
And we twice ten times ten,
Yet they hae but their tartan plaids,
And we are mail-clad men.

"My horse shall ride through ranks sae rude,
As through the moorland fern,
Then ne'er let the gentle Norman blude
Grow cauld for Highland kerne."

In this novel Scott began his practice of inventing mottoes, mainly from "Old Plays," for the headings of his chapters, and among these scraps are plain warrants for his title of poet. When they were collected into a little volume he owned that he could not, in all cases, profess to be certain of his authorship. His memory of the works of others was better than his memory of his own. "Pretty verses these, are they Byron's?" he said, on hearing some lady sing Cleveland's song from *The Pirate*. Of his memory Hogg tells the following anecdote, which may be given verbatim,

as Hogg's *Domestic Manners of Sir Walter Scott* is a rather rare little book.

"He, and Skene of Rubislaw, and I were out one night about midnight, leistering kippers in Tweed, about the end of January, not long after the opening of the river for fishing, which was then on the tenth, and Scott having a great range of the river himself, we went up to the side of the rough haugh of Elibank; but when we came to kindle our light, behold, our peat was gone out. This was a terrible disappointment, but to think of giving up our sport was out of the question, so we had no other shift save to send Bob Fletcher all the way through the darkness, the distance of two miles, for another fiery peat.

"The night was mild, calm, and as dark as pitch, and while Fletcher was absent we three sat down on the brink of the river, on a little green sward which I will never forget, and Scott desired me to sing them my ballad of 'Gilman's-cleuch.' Now, be it remembered that this ballad had never been printed, I had merely composed it by rote, and, on finishing it three years before, had sung it once over to

Sir Walter. I began it, at his request, but at the eighth or ninth stanza I stuck in it, and could not get on with another verse, on which he began it again and recited it every word from beginning to end. It being a very long ballad, consisting of eighty-eight stanzas, I testified my astonishment, knowing that he had never heard it but once, and even then did not appear to be paying particular attention. He said he had been out with a pleasure party as far as the opening of the Frith of Forth, and, to amuse the company, he had recited both that ballad and one of Southey's ('The Abbot of Aberbrothock'), both of which ballads he had only heard once from their respective authors, and he believed he recited them both without misplacing a word."

In May 1816 *The Antiquary* appeared; in April he had begun *The Tales of my Landlord*, he wrote the historical part of *The Annual Register*, and he trifled with *Harold the Dauntless*, while as busy as ever with official duties, society, and sport, adding 850 acres to his estate, by purchases of small farms at exorbitant prices. Meanwhile he did not clear off

the cargoes of encumbrances of useless books, and wind up the Ballantyne affairs. Instead of making a firm bargain with Constable, John Ballantyne negotiated the business of *The Black Dwarf* and *Old Mortality* with Mr. Blackwood and Mr. Murray—the volumes were not to bear the name of "the Author of *Waverley*." Now Mr. Blackwood, very naturally, did not care for *The Black Dwarf*, and "without seeking any glossy periphrase," spoke out his demand for alterations to James Ballantyne. Scott's temper was not governed on this occasion, but James did not report to Mr. Blackwood the very unparliamentary terms of the reply to his "most impudent proposal."

Old Mortality and *The Black Dwarf* came out, at the end of 1816, in four volumes. *The Black Dwarf* is of little account, but *Old Mortality* is in the first three of the *Waverley* novels in merit. Scott knew the Covenanting literature well, and, if he has made errors, for example where he writes as if the English Liturgy were in use, in the Scotland of the Restoration, he may be merely seeking effect.

But the learned Dr. M'Crie, the biographer of Knox, a most painful student of manuscript sources, published a long set of criticisms historical, in an Edinburgh serial, to which Scott thought fit to reply in a review of the romance in *The Quarterly*. Erskine wrote the literary parts of the criticism, while Scott replied, with much humour and great good humour, to his clerical censor. The Covenanters of the Restoration were a peculiar people. In 1660, when the King came to his own, the leaders of the milder party were ready to abate the claims of the preachers to "rule the roast" in politics; and one of the leaders wished to see the preachers of the fiercer party banished to the Orkneys. The zealots, on the other hand, desired Charles II to put down the Church of England in England, which meant civil war. But both parties were equally struck at by the introduction of Episcopacy without a Liturgy. Like the zealots on divers occasions, the Governors under Charles II expelled the Nonconformists from their pulpits. A rising followed, and then a skimble-skamble Government which offered "Indulgences" to Presbyterians.

The milder sort were satisfied with being tolerated, the wilder sort wished to be intolerant, and the Kirk split into divers sections, hating each other nearly as much as they hated prelatists. Strange wandering prophets, prophesying balderdash, scoured the country, pursued by dragoons, and in their utterances are many ludicrous things and anarchic doctrines, reprobated by the more peaceful section.

Scott knew all the parties, and was not tender to the absurdities. He had written a novel, not a history, and had used the licence of a novelist. Meanwhile in the beautiful character of Bessie Maclure, Scott surely made amends for his maniac preacher, his indulged preacher, and the rest of his warring Covenanters. The Claverhouse of the novel is not, of course, the actual Claverhouse of history, but he is more like the man than the absurd Claverhouse of Macaulay. One fault is attributed to the gallant Graham which he did not possess. Far from being reckless of plebeian as opposed to "gentle" blood, he urged the policy of sparing the multitude and punishing their "gentle leaders." It is improbable that

Claverhouse was given to quoting Froissart, as in the novel, but he did quote Lucan, an author admired by Scott.

We cannot go into a criticism of the historical accuracy of a novel. *Old Mortality* is not only one of Scott's most stirring tales, but it contains even an unusual number of his most admirable characters, Cuddie and Mause Headrigg, Gudyill, the Major, Goose Gibbie, Old Milnwood (a true "Laird Nippy"), the murderer, Burley, Bessie Maclure, Jenny Dennison, that unscrupulous coquette, Milnwood's housekeeper, the fallen Bothwell, the fanatics of every shade, and Claverhouse himself. Indeed, be the inaccuracies of detail what they may, and they are trivial, no romance based on book knowledge displays so correct a general picture of the men and the times.

Old Mortality himself, about whom Scott heard much from his friend, Mr. Train (who suggested the novel), had been met by the author in his youth at Dunottar Castle among the graves of the Covenanters who died of ill-usage in the castle dungeons. That a number

of soldiers in like manner perished of hunger when the Whigs got the upper hand at Edinburgh in 1688 is a circumstance generally omitted by the Whiggish Muse of Modern History. What would not have been said had hundreds of prisoners taken by Montrose been starved to death? Yet even Mr. Gardiner does not mention the hundreds of Royalist prisoners taken by Cromwell at Dunbar, immured in Durham Cathedral, and there permitted to die of hunger. To be sure the levies of Montrose took very few prisoners indeed, but settled all scores with the claymore.

Old Mortality contains a striking scene in which the appearance of Henry Morton is taken by Edith for his apparition, after or at the moment of death. The novels, like the poems, are seldom without a touch of "the supernatural," which, in the case of Morton's appearance, was the normal. In *Waverley* there is the death warning to Fergus MacIvor; in *Guy Mannering* there is the fulfilled horoscope: in *The Antiquary* the apparition to the hero is explained away, to some extent, but yields the desired effect. Scott was very much

interested in phantasms and witchcraft, his library is rich in rare old books full of ghostly narratives, Bovet, Lavaterus, Sinclair, Petrus Thyraeus and crowds of others. Neither his friends nor he himself knew the precise frontiers of his belief and disbelief. At an inn he slept soundly in one bed of a double-bedded room, while a dead man occupied the other. He was insensible to fear, in these airy matters, and says that he had only twice in his life felt "eery." Once it was at Glamis Castle, haunted for long by a legend of a Presence in a secret chamber. The secret of the chamber is no secret, and the Presence is borrowed bodily from a story current, in the eighteenth century, about Vale Royal in Cheshire. The other occasion on which Scott felt "eery" is not given by Lockhart, but is probably revealed by this anecdote of Gillies.

"The most awkward circumstance about *well-authenticated* hobgoblins," said he, "is that they, for the most part, come and disappear without any intelligible object or purpose, except to frighten people; which, with all due deference, seems rather foolish! Very

many persons have either seen a ghost, or something like one, and I am myself among the number; but my story is not a jot better than the others I have heard, which, for the most part, were very inept. The *good* stories are sadly devoid of evidence; the *stupid* ones only are authentic.

"There is a particular turning of the high road through the Forest near Ashestiel, at a place which affords no possible means of concealment; the grass is smooth, and always eaten bare by the sheep; there is no heather, nor underwood, nor cavern, in which any mortal being could conceal himself. Towards this very spot I was advancing one evening on horseback—please to observe it was *before* dinner, and not long after sunset, so that I ran no risk either of *seeing double*, or wanting sufficient light for my observations. Before me, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile, there stood a human figure, sharply enough defined by the twilight. I advanced; it stalked about with a long staff in its hand, held like a wand of office, but only went to and fro, keeping at the same corner, till, as I came

within a few yards, my friend all in an instant vanished. I was so struck with his eccentric conduct, that although Mrs. Scott was in delicate health, and I was anxious to get home to a late dinner, I could not help stopping to examine the ground all about, but in vain; he had either dissolved into air, or sunk into the earth, where I knew well there was no coal-pit to receive him. Had he lain down on the greensward, the colour of his drapery, which was dusky brown, would have betrayed him at once, so that there was no practicable solution of the mystery.

"I rode on, and had not advanced above fifty yards, when, on looking back, my friend was there again, and even more clearly visible than before. 'Now,' said I to myself, 'I most certainly have you!' so wheeled about and spurred Finella; but the result was as before, he vanished instantaneously. I must candidly confess I had now got enough of the phantasmagoria; and whether it were from a love of home, or a participation in my dislike of this very stupid ghost, no matter, Finella did her best to run away, and would by no means agree

to any further process of investigation. I will not deny that I felt somewhat uncomfortable, and half inclined to think that this apparition was a warning of evil to come, or indication, however obscure, of misfortune that had already occurred. So strong was this impression, that I almost feared to ask for Mrs. Scott when I arrived at Ashestiel; but, as Dr. Johnson said on a similar occasion, 'nothing ever came of it.'"

The strange disturbances at Abbotsford, as if all the heavy furniture were being moved about, did not make Scott "eery." He arose,

> Bolt upright
> And ready to fight,

armed for war with the sword of his Jacobite ancestor, Auld Beardie. But when the noises, never accounted for, were found to have been coincident with the death of the purveyor of the furniture, Mr. Bullock, in London, Lockhart admits that Scott was not only puzzled but considerably impressed.

Such rackets, preceding or accompanying a death, are familiar to writers whom he knew

well, Lavaterus, Thyraeus, Theophilus Insulanus on the Second Sight, and the rest, and persist among the beliefs of Highlands and Lowlands. There is always a hammering in the shop of a certain Highland carpenter, on the night before a coffin is ordered. On the whole Scott's frame of mind was akin, on this point, to that of Kant, who did not believe in any special ghost story, but did not disbelieve in ghost stories in general. He would say that the only men known to him who had seen ghosts were either mad, or later went mad, yet he had seen some kind of apparition himself. Everything connected with hypnotism (then styled Animal Magnetism) he dismissed as part of "the peck of dirt," which each generation must eat in its turn. Yet he was anxious to investigate the ink-gazing of Egypt, which he could easily have done, with a glass ball, at home. In short he enjoyed the human thrill which is awakened by good stories of the "supernormal," and communicated the thrill in Wandering Willie's Tale, in the appearance of the death wraith of old Alice to the Master of Ravenswood (the best wraith in fiction), in

My Aunt Margaret's Mirror, and in the terrible story, gleaned from Hannah More, of *The Tapestried Chamber*. His *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* are the work of his declining age, and adopt the dull line of sturdy common-sense. But his explanation of the information received in a dream, in *The Antiquary*, is that of St. Augustine, and even, in many cases, of Mr. F. W. H. Myers, with his theory of the more normal workings of the "Subliminal Self."

For more than twenty years Scott had enjoyed unbroken health, and had treated "the machine," his body and brain, as few men except Napoleon have overtaxed that engine. In Edinburgh he lived, he says, "too genially." Lockhart has described his plain but Gargantuan breakfasts; he took little or no exercise, driving to court with other advocates, and we must remember that the dinner parties of that age began early and ended late, while the champagne and sherry and port and Burgundy were followed by a "shass caffy" (as Mr. Henry Foker calls it), in the shape of rummers of whisky and water, "hot, with." A healthier

generation is justly horrified by these excesses of conviviality, in which Scott took his part, like other advocates and judges of his time, rising at five o'clock next morning to write twenty or thirty printed pages of his novel. At Abbotsford, he said, he never sat down, as in Edinburgh he was always seated, at one kind of table or another. His task done before breakfast, he rode or drove, or worked in his plantations, or underwent the toil of receiving bores, he coursed, he passed the midnight hours in "burning the water," that is, spearing salmon by torchlight, a picturesque but now, happily, an illegal pastime.

The refreshment of the machine was writing at a furious pace, and, in 1817, the longsuffering mechanism resented its treatment. Scott had still eight years of apparent prosperity before him, but he had no more years of unbroken health. Violent "cramps in the stomach," as they were called, seized him, and drove this stoic, "bellowing like a bull," forth from the guests at his own table. He tells us, and Hogg tells us, that heated salt, which burned his shirt to ashes, was applied to the seat of his

malady, "and I hardly felt it," says the sufferer. Then came the heroic remedies of profuse bleeding and blistering, and diet of toast, with only three glasses of wine daily. It was *in tormentis* that he finished *Rob Roy* and dictated *The Bride of Lammermoor*, the story being often interrupted by his outcries of pain. Fortunately he now had Will Laidlaw with him as amanuensis. That he undertook *Rob Roy* (for once "writing up to a name," to please Constable) in such circumstances of recurring agony and weakness, was an example, perhaps of his courage, certainly, in the words of St. Francis, an instance of his hardness on "his brother the ass," his fleshly body. Much heavy labour on history for *The Annual Register*, and on other essays, accompanied his work in fiction, and he was reduced to a state of languor in which, for once in the tone of self pity, he wrote the beautiful lines beginning

> The sun upon the Weirdlaw hill,
> In Ettrick's vale is sinking sweet.

Scott was still adding acre to acre, but *Rob Roy* and the gallant price offered by Constable,



"THE ABBOTSFORD FAMILY."

After the painting by Sir David Wilkie, R.A.

enabled him to redeem the bond for £4,000 of which the Duke of Buccleuch was guarantor. At this time Lockhart and *Blackwood's Magazine* came into his life. In Lockhart he was to find a son rather than a son-in-law, though he could not wean him from that perilous enchantress, Maga, which was then in the wild heyday of its stormy youth. He declared that *Rob Roy* (December 1817), "smells of the cramp"; he had to wind it up more rapidly than he intended, but his fatally buoyant spirits led him to hope that in four or five years he might add the considerable estate of Faldonside to his acres, a dream which haunted his enfeebled mind in his ultimate decrepitude. Meanwhile expense on the estate of Abbotsford, and on the acquisition of curios for the collection, went on briskly, Scott paying prices probably too high, and conducting his affairs with the people on his land with a profuse but judicious generosity. He discovered, as others have done, real taste and artistic power amongst the craftsmen in wood and stone in the district, and encouraged it to the best of his power. His gold was not spent in vain, but

the need for money grew with every year, and he did not measure his own labour by his failing strength.

Rob Roy, whether it "smelled of the cramp" or not, was as popular as its hero has ever been in Scotland, where he has the same sort of reputation as Robin Hood. The novel is unusually defective in composition, the mystery of Rashleigh's compound of commercial malfeasance with bills, and of treacherous Jacobitism has always baffled the reader. The melodrama of Helen Macgregor is, in Mr. Stevenson's phrase, "too steep," and the whole plot is not more lucid than some plots of Dickens. While Diana Vernon[1] is, by popular acclaim, peerless among the heroines of Scott, while her love story is a real love story, her wooer is not more interesting than the general run of Scott's heroes. The book is saved by Diana, by the reiver himself, by the delightful Baillie, and by that flower of serving Men, the canny Scottish gardener Andrew

[1] That Diana Vernon is drawn from Scott's friend, Miss Cranstoun, the Countess von Purgstall, is an uncertain theory of Basil Hall's.

Fairservice. In this novel the secret of authorship was let out, but passed unobserved. The long lecture by the Baillie on the state of the Highlands is taken straight from a manuscript of Graham of Gartmore, from whom Scott purchased his most authentic relic, the sword of the great Montrose. Scott lent the manuscript to Jamieson, who published it in his edition of Burt's *Letters from the North*, acknowledging his debt to Scott. Now as Scott used his manuscript in *Rob Roy*, here was a plain *pièce de conviction*, but no hunter after proof of authorship of the *Waverley* novels ever detected the facts, in fact I believe that I was the first person who observed them!

The next novel, perhaps less permanently popular (for *Rob Roy* holds the stage in London as I write), but more excellent, was *The Heart of Midlothian* (June 1818). Lady Louisa Stewart wrote that she "was a little tired of your Edinburgh lawyers in the Introduction," and they are fatiguing; not so the lawyers of whom Saddletree converses with so much freedom. English people are welcome to be impatient of the passages alluding to Scottish law through-

out, but Scottish readers cannot weary of these admirably humorous pictures of the jovial and learned old national Bar, one of the few institutions not denationalized by the Union of 1707. The lover of Effie Deans is by far too melodramatic, too "satanic." For once, in this failure of a character, Scott was imitating Byron's heroes, whether he knew it or not, as Byron imitated figures like the Schedoni of Mrs. Radcliffe. The story does break down at Rosneath, as Lady Louisa said: that portion is only redeemed by "the gracious Duncan," a most amusing "slander on the Highlanders." Then we have Dumbiedykes, and Rory Bean, and the very pearl of belated Covenanters Davie Deans. He is "lifted" straight from that honest, brave, absurd Peter or Patrick Walker, who suffered torture as a mere boy during the Restoration, and lived well into the eighteenth century, compiling his biographies of Covenanting characters, such as Cameron and Peden. Walker was to them what Izaak Walton was to the great divines of the Church of England in his long and well-contented day. How true Davie Deans is to his model the

reader may discover in Mr. Hay Fleming's *Saints of the Covenant*, a reprint of Walker's Biographies with notes. When we add Ratcliffe, the pleasing rogue, the wild singer, Madge Wildfire, the thrilling interest of the Porteous mob, the study of the great Duke of Argyll, the scene with the Queen, the adventures of the road, and the matchless character of Jeanie Deans, with her foil in the pretty wilful Effie, we must acknowledge that, if *The Heart of Midlothian* is not absolutely the first, alone in place, of the *Waverley* novels, it is certainly second to none. "I should have found you out," wrote Lady Louisa, in that one parenthesis, "for the man was mortal and had been a schoolmaster." No number of formal histories can convey nearly so full and true a picture of Scottish life about 1730–40, as *The Heart of Midlothian*. As social history it is unrivalled. In Edinburgh Lockhart had never witnessed "such a scene of all engrossing enthusiasm," in any literary matter, as on the appearance of this novel. To think of it is to wish to throw down the pen, and take the book again from the shelf, as Thackeray says when

he chances to mention Dugald Dalgetty. But young people now, as they did in 1818, according to Lady Louisa, "never heard of the Duke of Argyll before. 'Pray who was Sir Robert Walpole?' they ask me, 'and when did he live?' or, perhaps, 'was not the great Lord Chatham in Queen Anne's days?'" Readers who are exhaustively ignorant of and unconcerned about the past, cannot be expected to read Scott, and such readers were common in his own time, not to speak of our educated age.

The Bride of Lammermoor appears to have been begun before *The Heart of Midlothian* was published. At the end of 1818 Scott received a baronetcy, and though he at once anticipated the quotation (which Hogg incontinently made),

> I like not
> Such grinning honour as Sir Walter hath,

no doubt he liked very well the revival of the old Border name, "Sir Walter Scott." That he should enjoy the title was perfectly natural, and its gift, as the Prince Regent really was

fond of literature, seems no less in nature.

With the winter, and with the sedentary life of Edinburgh, the terrible cramps returned. He sold his copyrights to Constable for £12,000, and had Constable paid, before 1826, the bond of 1818, Scott would have had no later interest in this valuable property. But, characteristically, the debt was not fully discharged before Constable's ruin in 1826. The spring of 1819 was passed under torment, and under the medical artillery of bleeding, blistering, calomel, and ipecacuanha. As a better remedy Scott's Highland piper selected twelve stones from twelve southward running streams; on these the patient was to sleep. Scott, however, said that the charm stones only worked if wrapped in the petticoat of a widow who had never wished to marry again, and Science, in the person of the piper, abandoned the case. Removal to Abbotsford did not alleviate the pangs, but here Scott dictated *The Bride of Lammermoor* to Will Laidlaw and John Ballantyne. He was interrupted by cries wrung from him in agony, and it is not wonderful, perhaps, that when he saw the book in print, he could

not remember a single line of it, but read in fear and trembling, for who knew what absurdity it might contain? Thackeray had the same experience as to part of *Pendennis*, written before a serious illness. In Scott's case perhaps the incredible amount of opiates with which he was drugged may explain his forgetfulness. "As to giving over work," he said to Laidlaw, "that can only be when I am in woollen."

When Lockhart visited Scott, in May 1819, the colour of his hair had changed from a brindled grey to snow white, at the age of forty-seven. His face "was meagre, haggard, and of the deadliest yellow of the jaundice." That night, in a fresh fit of pain, his cries were distinctly audible at a considerable distance from the house, but by eleven o'clock next day he mounted his horse and rode with Lockhart past Philiphaugh and up Yarrow, discoursing of Montrose's defeat, and in high spirits about a pending election. Yet, a month later, when *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *The Legend of Montrose* appeared, Scott was believed to be on his deathbed. One night he took leave of

his family, expressing in simple terms his Christian faith, "and now leave me that I may turn my face to the wall." He slept, and the crisis passed over. By July 19 he had nearly finished a volume of *Ivanhoe*, which he expected to complete in September. Such enthusiasm of industry, in such circumstances, is without parallel in literary history. *The Bride of Lammermoor* is a subject which leaves an author no choice; he must make his novel end badly: he cannot avoid the tragic, and tragedy scarcely suits the genius of Scott. He knew the tale of the mysterious death of Stair's daughter, from tradition in his family, and, after his illness, he remembered the legend as well as ever: of his own handling of the tale he could remember nothing. As to the real facts of the case, Dr. Hickes heard them from the Duke of Lauderdale, and, again, from the father of the Bride himself, but Hickes declined to write the story down, lest his memory might be at fault. Scott was not aware of these historical facts, which are certainly tantalizing, as the real facts are unknown.

Not only are the data of the story things of

unrelieved gloom, but Scott has chosen to show Fate dealing with a heroine gentle, innocent, and weak. Of all heroes of novels, perhaps only two frankly tell their lady loves that their fathers are not gentlemen! One of these candid wooers is Darcy, in *Pride and Prejudice*, and Elizabeth causes him to rue his candour. The other is the Master of Ravenswood, and Lucy Ashton does not resent his words. It is on this poor pathetic broken creature, as harmless as Rose Bradwardine, that Fate deals a blow which might have crushed these old Royal Greek protagonists, whom Aristotle deemed the only proper central figures of tragedy. The results are really rather miserable than tragic in the strict sense of the word, the victim only ceases to be feeble when she ceases to be sane. Her lover, again, the Master, is a personage quite alien to the nature of Scott. The Master, to be sure, is very unfortunate indeed, a disinherited knight, like Ivanhoe, but he is not more bereaved and impoverished than Quentin Durward is at the opening of his tale. But Quentin bears a merry heart, and goes all the way, like hundreds

of his countrymen through several centuries, finding fortune, honour, and a bride in French service. The Master, on the other hand, mopes in his gloomy tower, thinks of assassinating his supplanter, Sir William Ashton, but declines into saving him from a bull, like Johnny Eames in *The Small House at Allingham*, and falls in love with the daughter of his supplanter. Tennyson chose to revive the set of situations in his *Maud*, where the hero is much more peevish and hysterical than the Master of Ravenswood, while of the heroine we practically know nothing, except that, at sixteen, Maud was tall and stately, and had a classical profile. The situations were not, we repeat, adapted to Scott's genius, but they were congenial to the foreseen and inevitable conclusion of the story, as given by history. Lockhart tells us that Caleb Balderwood was never regarded as a successful humorous character, and we fall back on Bucklaw and that inimitable captain, Craigingelt, for humorous relief, while the genuine tragic element is supplied by old Alice, by the eery scene in which her wraith appears to the Master, and

by the Chorus, as it were, of the poor old envious women, suspected of sorcery, the watchers of the dead. Scott never surpassed his dealings with these horrible creatures. The conclusion when

> The last Lord of Ravenswood to Ravenswood doth ride,
> To woo a dead maiden to be his bride,

with the mystery of all that befell in the bridal bower and the ride of Lucy to church, her hand clay cold in that of her boyish brother, himself admirably sketched, are entirely worthy of the genius of the author. When we consider the circumstances in which he dictated the tale, we may well marvel that he could rise to such height of power. But otherwise the novel is not to be reckoned among his best: it lacks much of the usual happy humour. Yet it has had admirers among good judges who set it in the forefront of his romances.

Thackeray, an excellent judge, greatly preferred to the sombre Master the redoubted Rittmeister, Dugald Dalgetty, of the *Legend of Montrose*, which was published in company

with *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Dugald is a garrulous pedant, and may be styled "one of Scott's bores," but he never bores us, whether when he sets forth his simple reasons for serving with the King's army, not with the Covenanters; or criticises the various services of Europe, or lectures on the propriety of fortifying the sconce of Drumsnab, or faces Argyll in Inveraray, or masters him in the dungeon, or wheedles the Presbyterian chaplain, or mocks the bows and arrows of his allies the Children of the Mist: or does deeds of *derring do* at Inverlochy, or swaggers about in the fresh glories of his title of Knight Banneret. Dugald is always a perfect joy, even if we be little interested, as we are, in the loves of Annot Lyle and in the second-sighted man with his gloom and his visions. It is difficult to guess what Scott may have originally meant to do with Montrose, the most sympathetic figure in the long pageant of Scottish history. With the romance of his life and character fiction cannot cope: nothing can match his actual history. In Argyll, again, Scott encountered a personage whose psychology was

too intricate for his hasty methods. But his fingers, as he says in a letter of this period, sometimes seemed to him to work automatically, against his conscious purpose. There was, as has been said of Molière, a *lutin* that rode his pen. The good horse Gustavus, in fact, " with Dalgetty up," ran away with Scott, and the romance became practically the story of one man, the Rittmeister.

In the whirl of his multifarious activities, Scott remained canny enough to consider his profession of romance as a manufactory subject to changes of fashion and taste. His " tweeds," so to speak, his tales of Scottish manners, might go out of vogue, though there was as yet little competition on the part of other makers. Deliberately, therefore, so he declares, he determined to turn out a new article of a nature as remote as possible from his Scottish fabrics, a romance of English mediaeval life. In that period no character is so romantic and popular as Richard I, and there is no more popular figure in legend than Robin Hood, though his date (if he be more than a mere ideal outlaw) is unknown, some facts point vaguely to his

era as that of Edward II. Again, there was the picturesque contrast between the manners of the conquered English and conquering Normans, which, once pointed out by Scott, attracted the studies of Thierry, the French historian. A forgotten play, *Runimede*, by the half-forgotten and "unfortunate Logan," had been seen by Scott, and, he says, suggested his idea, while the old rhyme of "Tring, Wing, and Ivanhoe" gave him a sonorous name which (a great point with Scott) revealed nothing of the nature and scope of his narrative. He disliked "writing up" to names of familiar associations, such as "Rob Roy" and "Kenilworth." With "Ivanhoe" people did not know what to expect, and could not be disappointed.

Mr. Freeman spoke severely of the incorrect history and archaeology of *Ivanhoe*. There can be no such name as Cedric, the Confessor had no "sprouts"—of whom Athelstane, in some mysterious way, is a survivor. But these were matters of indifference to the novelist, as he candidly explained, and he gratified Ulrica with heathen deities, not familiar to her

remotest ancestors, but preferred by her to the Christian creed. In fact he sounded his kettle drums by night, like Claverhouse's troopers in *Old Mortality*, for the sake of the effect, and careless of the circumstance that, at night, the kettle drums do not clash on the march, just as he gave Claverhouse a post of command which he did not hold. He admitted that he had blended the manners of several distinct centuries, but what matter? "Such errors will escape the general class of readers," and the author helps himself from Froissart, when The Monk of Croyland does not serve his turn. Here is "confession and avoidance," and the general reader, any reader of sense, cares no more for Mr. Freeman's censures than for the precise truth about the palisade at Senlac. Sir Walter was really hit by a criticism of one of his blazons, metal upon metal, but he found an authentic parallel case, and remarked that heraldry was in its infancy, and had not developed half of its rules. An account of the German Jews, given by Skene of Rubislaw, suggested Isaac of York and Rebecca, the sudden death of an advocate in court gave the

hint which, in the very unlooked for demise of The Templar, rescues Ivanhoe from a situation out of which the reader sees "no outgait." But surely we should have had some previous warning that the hardy Templar suffered from a cardiac affection? Scott did not think of that, and caught at a kind of miracle, which, I own, seemed to me far fetched and unsatisfactory at the uncritical age of ten. A thunderstorm over the lists and lightning attracted by The Templar's lance appeared an "outgait" more picturesque, and, considering the robust health of The Templar, rather more probable, while vindicatory of divine justice to a remarkable degree. Cannot you see the combatants clashing in the mirk, unbeheld by the spectators; you see the flash descend with the torrential rain, and the marshals of the lists, penetrating the veil of mist, find The Templar a clay cold corpse, and the Disinherited Knight "quite safe, though very wet," like the people in the play of *The Stranger*.

However, Scott was otherwise inspired! The appearance of *Ivanhoe*, in December 1819, marked the flood-tide of his popularity. The

English rejoiced at being freed from "the dialect," which was and remains to them a stumbling block, though they find no difficulty in the lingo of the modern "Kailyard." Lockhart says that, after *Ivanhoe*, the sale of Scott's novels fell off, though Constable managed to conceal the circumstance from the author, an ill-judged proceeding.

As Lockhart says, the next three or four years were the most expensive in Scott's life, through his ignorance of the truth, whereas they should have been years of retrenchment. It became proportionately difficult for Sir Walter to "pull up" in his expenditure, and the mine was laid that exploded seven years later. *Ivanhoe* remains one of the best known of Scott's novels, probably because it is precisely suited to the taste of boyhood, when the eyes of studious boys can be diverted from the mysteriously bewitching romances of the late Mr. Henty. We have all sighed with Rebecca, we have all been of Thackeray's opinion about the "very English" respectable Rowena, we have all hated Front de Boeuf; "*amo Locksley*," says Thackeray, and so say all of us; we

have delighted in Friar Tuck, laughed with Wamba, and over the much-criticised scene, due to Scott's good nature, of the resurrection of a trencherman so resolute as Athelstane. No mere knock on the head could get rid of so thick-skulled a thane as the lord of Conings-burgh.

While Scott's health was recovered, while Abbotsford was full of guests, and the Abbots-ford Hunt was, as the farmer said, the thing worth living for in the year, *The Monastery* was being written, and proved a not undeserved failure, relatively speaking. The only disaster of Scott, in his treatment of visionary things, is the White Lady of Avenel, and of all his bores, the Euphuist, Sir Percy Shafton is the least humorous, and was regarded as the most tedi-ous. The business of the bodkin, and the tailor ancestry of the really gallant though rather distraught knight, did not amuse, and the historical setting is not handled in a manner worthy of the opportunity, the sudden fall of the ancient Church.

Never, surely, was such a *bouleversement* as the religious revolution taken so quietly as in

Scotland. The only change, said the keeper of a hostel at St. Andrews, was that where the Dean had sat and called for claret, the Moderator sat and shouted for more toddy! This is a story of Scott's, probably apocryphal, for toddy did not come in with Presbyterianism, and Darnley is the only whisky drinker whom I have remarked in the documents of the period. The truth is that, in many districts of the South, Catholicism was dead before it fell. The love of "a new day," as they called it, and relief from priestly dues, with the fun of havoc and pillage, were universally attractive, and only a remnant, in outlying parishes, mourned for the Mass that had become a capital offence. Very few sentimental regrets accompanied the flight of the ancient faith, and the Abbot of Unreason jigged joyously through the roofless cathedrals. Thus perhaps the dramatic opportunity of Scott was less excellent than it seems at a first glance. Only Knox's "rascal multitude" began to discover, after they had helped to wreck the monasteries, that life was as hardly ground down by lay as by clerical landlords, that gaiety was gone, that holidays were cur-

tailed, that the penances of the new Kirk were harsher than those of the old, and that Sunday, from a feast, had become a day of gloom. Under James VI a preacher observed that he feared the rabble more than he did the Catholic earls, but rabble and earls were alike brought under the yoke. All this had not been foreseen, and thus the Reformation was taken lightly, not with the terrible struggles of contemporary France.

Far from being depressed, and abandoning his theme, Scott deliberately reverted to it, continuing some of the characters of *The Monastery* in *The Abbot*. To Lockhart, now his son-in-law, he sent a copy, with the inscription,

> Up he rose in a funk, lapped a toothful of brandy,
> And to it again . . . any odds upon Sandy?

The Introduction to *Nigel* contains, with the rest of Scott's *Ars Poetica*, a half apology for "The White Lady of Avenel." She disappears from *The Abbot*, which, by virtue of the picture of Queen Mary and her Loch Leven adventures, and of Catherine Seyton, with all the lively scenes in old Marian Edinburgh,

helped to restore the author's shaken popularity.

John Ballantyne had ventured a "Novelists' Library," heavy books in double columns, and Scott contributed charming introductory essays, but in the summer of 1821 he lost this favourite henchman, and remarked that the sun would never shine so brightly again for himself. John clearly was no man of business, his possessions were a minus quantity, though he believed himself to have some property, and bequeathed a visionary £2,000 to Scott.

Sir Walter went to London for the Coronation of George IV. Others, "the *non est tanti* men," might sneer, he said, at such pageants, might be "crucified to them"—as the Covenanting Laird of Brodie prayed to be crucified to the glories of the Lord Mayor's Show—but Scott defended "the natural and unaffected pleasure which men like me receive from sights of splendour and sounds of harmony." The Coronation wholly pleased him, but for the error of the Champion, who used a Highland target, "instead of a three-cornered or *beater shield*, which, in time of tilt, was suspended

round the neck." Scott had made the Highland target too fashionable: hence the heresy of the Champion. Scott was recognized by the Scots Greys with cries of "God bless Sir Walter," and was allowed to pass on foot through the tabooed space which they guarded on the outside of the Abbey. At this time was executed the bust of Scott by Chantrey, no doubt by far the best representation of the man. Raeburn, as Scott remarked, painted him as "a somewhat chowder-headed" person. Indeed no portrait caught the vivacity of his changeful expression, all, except the bust, are more or less "chowder-headed."

Before John Ballantyne's death Scott had begun *Kenilworth*. Constable appears to have suggested *The Armada* as a subject, and to have collected many rare Elizabethan books for Sir Walter's use. Then he preferred the title of *The Nunnery*, while Scott's fancy went back to his favourite lines in Meikle's ballad, and to the title of *Cumnor Hall*. But he chose *Kenilworth*, to please Constable. His motto, "No scandal about Queen Elizabeth," directed his course. Though a patriotic Scot, he was too

chivalrous to avenge on Queen Elizabeth the wrongs of Mary Stuart. By the most daring of anachronisms he deserted the real period of the affair of Amy Robsart, when scandal, not unprovoked, about Elizabeth was rife in the popular mouth and in every Court of Europe (1560). In the mystery of Amy Robsart's death, Scott had a psychological subject. Leicester and Amy had been married, not secretly but publicly, in the reign of Edward VI. During that of Mary Tudor a strong attachment sprang up between Elizabeth and Leicester, then Lord Robert Dudley. On Elizabeth's accession to the throne she loaded her favourite and Master of the Horse with unprecedented honours. Dudley was ever at Court, his wife lived retired at Cumnor Hall, and it was now said that she had a fatal disease, now that attempts were being made to poison her.

Meanwhile the triumphant Scottish Protestants, with the leader of the conquered Catholics, Archbishop Hamilton, were united for once in proposing that the Queen of England should marry the next heir to the throne

of Scotland, the Earl of Arran, a Protestant, the friend of Knox. But, not to speak of other reasons, the favour of Dudley with Elizabeth stood in the way. Cecil spoke of the danger of Lady Robert Dudley in the gloomiest terms, to the Spanish ambassador. To the English agent in Scotland, Randolph, Cecil wrote a letter, which has been destroyed, but which chilled Randolph's heart. The death of Darnley was not more clearly foreseen, in 1567, than the death of Dudley's wife in 1560. Then, a few days after Cecil's letter to Randolph, news of Lady Robert's death came to Windsor. How she died no man knows to this day. The verdict of the coroner's jury, an open verdict apparently, cannot be discovered. Amy had sent all her household except two or three ladies to a fair at Abingdon. Their story was that, on returning, they found their mistress lying dead, with a broken neck, at the foot of a flight of stairs. She had suddenly left her ladies, who made no inquiries, and now the was dead. Elizabeth told an envoy of her ambassador at Paris that there had been "an attempt" at Cumnor Hall, but that none of

Leicester's retainers was present. We know no more, but Mr. Froude, by a misunderstanding of the evidence, made it seem almost impossible to doubt that Elizabeth had what could not be guiltless foreknowledge of the catastrophe. This is an error; this is not warranted by the evidence. The behaviour of Dudley, again, on receiving the news of his wife's death, was that of an innocent man: he did all that he could to secure an investigation without favour.

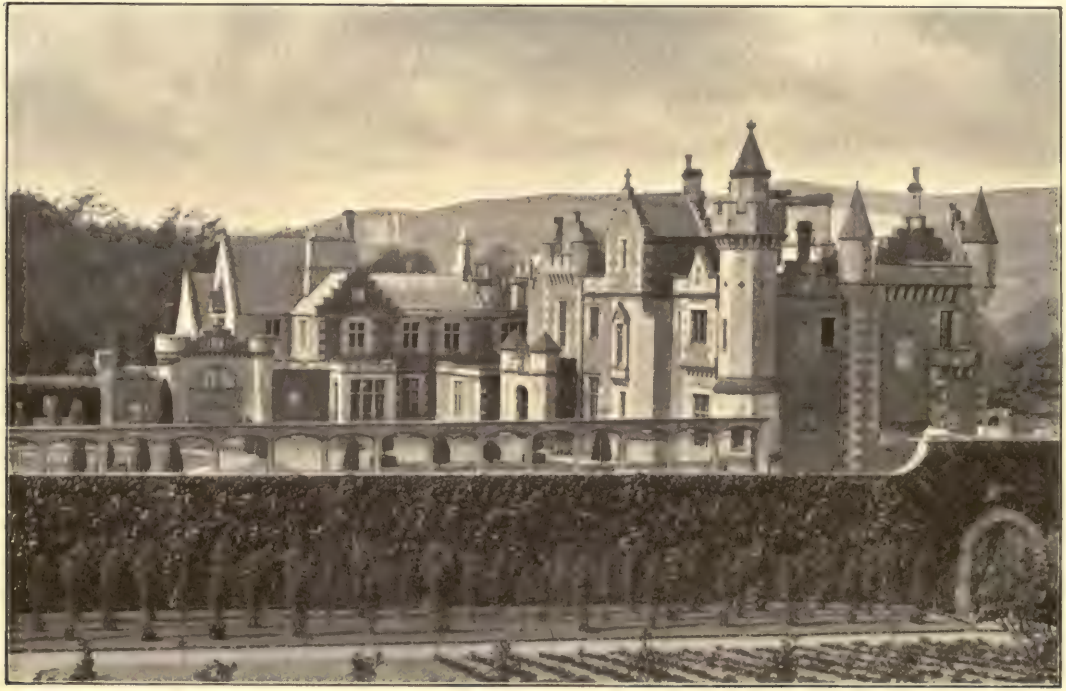
So the case stands, and Sir Walter might have avenged Mary Stuart by showing that Elizabeth was in no better position, as regards the death of Amy, than is Mary as regards the death of Darnley. But Scott rejected the temptation: he chose to say that Dudley's marriage was a secret, and unknown to Elizabeth, and by keeping Amy alive for many years after her death, he contrived a meeting between the unconscious rivals, the Queen and the bride, at the festivals of Kenilworth. Such is his audacious handling of the facts, and he has given Elizabeth a more dignified part than she was wont to play, where Leicester was con-

cerned : he has made her a right royal lady. She is magnificent in the meeting with Amy, and in her challenge of Leicester. The novel has thus always been a favourite in England, and there are even critics who put this romance based on bookwork before the best of all in which Scott delineates the manners best known to him, those of his own countrymen. Yet the novel is far better than many other critics admit. Amy is a spirited, lovely, and interesting heroine. Leicester is flattered, but the portrait is fine. The village humours, and the ruffianly soldier of fortune, Mike Lambourne, are very happily handled. Varney comes as near Iago in his resolute wickedness as it was in the power of Scott to go ; and there is good in Flibbertigibbet, though we see too much of him ; and more good in Tony Fire the Faggot, though Tony's character, in real life, appears to have escaped censure : his epitaph, at least, is alive to testify to that, though the rewards heaped by Leicester on the occupant of Cumnor Hall " do something smack."

CHAPTER VI

Novels, Financial Ruin, Death

THIS period was the zenith of Scott's apparent prosperity. Five thousand guineas were given, or were to be given, by Constable for the remaining copyright of *Ivanhoe*, *The Monastery*, *The Abbot*, and *Kenilworth*. "Scott must have reckoned on clearing £30,000 at least in the course of a couple of years, by the novels written within such a period," says Lockhart. Constable granted bills for four unnamed and unimagined "works of fiction," and they proved to be *Peveril*, *Quentin Durward*, *St. Ronan's Well*, and *Redgauntlet*. Scott's eldest son was now in an expensive cavalry regiment; his second son was preparing for the University, Abbotsford was growing in extent and expense, and Scott was keeping open house. Lockhart, then liv-



ABBOTSFORD.

Photo by Valentine & Sons, Dundee.

ing in the tiny neighbouring cottage of Chiefswood, was a man who did not suffer bores gladly, and he saw Abbotsford full of bores of all kinds—inquisitive foreigners, University prigs, condescending great people, and local lairds with their families. He reckoned that at least a sixth of the peerage of England passed through Abbotsford, and all the distinguished people of Scotland! With these came obscure citizens of Edinburgh, old college mates and office mates of Scott: "These were welcome guests, let who might be under that roof," and Scott "contrived to make them all equally happy, with him, with themselves, and with each other."

He was the genius of hospitality: he lavished his time on his guests, who had him with them for the whole of the day, except when he rode early to Chiefswood and wrote *The Pirate* on a bureau which remains in the cottage. He seemed the idlest of men, while scores of essays, and letters not to be counted, in addition to the novels, flowed from his pen in the unbroken hours of early morning. Only his extraordinary strength and buoyancy could enable him

to be at once the most lavish host and the most prolific writer of his age, perhaps of any age. Merely to "refresh the machine" he was writing these admirable imitations of the correspondence of the sixteenth century which he called "Private Letters." They might have deceived the elect of Antiquarians, but they could not have been popular with the public, though one character was a *bona roba*, an unaccustomed apparition in Sir Walter's work. He threw the Letters aside, in his last days he fancied that he had finished them, and that they were a valuable asset. In fact, he turned from them and began *Nigel*, a romance of the same period, apparently before he had brought *The Pirate* to a close.

That "splendid romance," as Lockhart calls it, based on Scott's visit to the Orcades in 1814, was published in December 1821. Though the fair and dark sisters, Minna and Brenda, were popular, and Cleveland himself had a vogue, the humours of the Udaler and of the agriculturist were not enjoyed, and Norna of the Fitful Head, a kind of civilized Ulrica, was never much appreciated.

It is not necessary here to enter into the details about a luckless Tory newspaper, *The Beacon*, which had Scott's support, but was conducted in an amateur and bludgeonly fashion, in spite of his advice. There was nothing but blundering and bad language, and Scott declined to see the paper. Yet he was one of its early supporters, and there is evidence suggesting (I have not seen this evidence) that he was nearly involved in a duel, while his friend, Sir Alexander Boswell of Auchinleck, was unfortunately shot in an affair arising out of a successor to *The Beacon*. "I have kept Lockhart out of this scrape, in which some of the young men are knee deep," writes Sir Walter. "I hope," he wrote to Lockhart, after Auchinleck's duel, "that this catastrophe will end the species of personal satire and abuse which has crept into our political discussions. The lives of brave and good citizens were given them for other purposes than to mingle in such unworthy affrays."

Nigel was published in May 1822, and Constable, who was in London, saw people reading it, in Macaulay's fashion, as they walked along

the streets. The ship which carried the edition arrived on a Sunday, by Monday 7,000 copies had been dispersed. So Constable asked Scott to write a trifle, like the poem of *Halidon Hall* (for which he paid £1,000) every quarter : every poem to be on a battle. Lockhart thought that Constable's brain was " well nigh unsettled." Quite unsettled, if he expected the public to buy £4,000 worth of battle poetry every year, while the press was producing 30,000 volumes of *Peveril of the Peak*. Ballantyne's press was turning out at this date 145,000 volumes of works by Scott, and Constable was about buying an estate called Balniel. Yet, all the while, the old £12,000, the price for a set of copyrights, had not been and never was fully paid. There seems to have been the slenderest metallic basis for waggon loads of bills, which all concerned looked on as being as good as bullion.

The Fortunes of Nigel (May 1822) was the last novel written by Scott before his labours produced an ominous change in his health. It is, no doubt, as Lockhart says, in the first rank of his romances. The story is *vécu* : Scott had

lived as long among the dramas, pamphlets, histories, and documents of the late Elizabethan and the Jacobean times, as in any part of our history, and his Scottish types of character he knew by heart. All that Jacobean comedy, mainly the play of Ben Jonson, could tell him, he had fresh in his memory, or could "bring out with a wet finger." Hence the brilliance and vivacity of the street scenes, the rufflers in Alsatia, the scenes at Court, and at the ordinary. He caught the moment when the heavy-hilted broad sword of the Scottish sire was becoming the long rapier of the Scottish son. In gentle King Jamie he had a model of which the grotesque absurdity needed pruning rather than exaggeration, and of all Scott's many portraits of Kings, the slobbering trotting figure of James is the most truthful and the most comic. These moralists who denounce dissimulation and incontinence, Baby Charles and Steenie, are delicately touched: Ritchie Moniplies is a worthy pendant to Andrew Fairservice: the prentices are as excellent as the bullies and the old miser with his stern daughter in Alsatia: the whole life of

Jacobean London is placed before us as vividly as the life of Georgian Edinburgh in *The Heart of Midlothian.* The "hero," too, the unheroic hero, is, for once, a living and even realistic character. The ancestral Puritanism of Nigel degenerates into the cautious gambling of "The Sparrow Hawk," who plays with prentices for small sums, and takes care to leave off a winner. Nobody can deny that this is a natural metamorphosis, though the effect is to make us rather detest Nigel. He is supposed to throw off his mean vice, but he cannot be styled amiable. George Heriot is a better kind of man, and Ritchie is as superior to his master, morally, as Strap to Roderick Random. The young women of the tale, the pretty daughter of the goldsmith, and the mysterious lady, do not distinguish themselves among Scott's young women. But the book is certainly in the foremost rank.

The visit of George IV to Edinburgh, with the death of Erskine, slain by a calumny at which most men would have laughed, put a strain upon Scott, in July and August 1822, from which he never recovered. The toil of organizing the reception of the first crowned

King of England who had visited Scotland since 1650 fell upon Sir Walter. Scott was, in great part, the cause of the Royal visit, and his whole strength was given to organizing success. There was "a grand terryfication" (dramatization in the manner of Terry the actor) "of the Holyrood chapters in *Waverley*." The Highlanders were much to the front, "all plaided and plumed in their tartan array," and the fat white legs of George IV appeared under the once forbidden philabeg. His Majesty, a man of vivid imagination, conceived himself to be a true Stuart, come to his own again; and Scott, himself in the Campbell tartan and trews, appears to have accepted him in that romantic character. He himself was the Baron Bradwardine of the hour, and we know how the Baron sat down on a glass which had touched the lips of His Most Sacred Majesty, and cut himself rather badly. In the sultry weather he "had to arrange everything, from the ordering of a procession to the cut of a button," and he had also to amuse the perplexed old poet Crabbe, who seized on this frantic moment for a visit to a nation which he did not understand.

In one light the visit of George was very well. It reconciled the furious feuds which had raged around *The Beacon*, and it was a proof that Scotland, at last, was content with the Hanoverian in the disguise of the Stuart dynasty. The Highland chiefs were anxious about their precedence, which is said to have depended on the station occupied by each clan at Bannockburn, a point probably to be decided on the extremely diverse traditions of the clan bards or sennachies. Scott, aided by General Stewart of Garth, the historian of the Highland regiments, was the Montrose who brought harmony among the clans, no easy task where Glengarry and Clanranald were at odds about the chiefship of the Macdonalds, and Cluny and Mackintosh were not of one mind as to the headship of Clan Chattan. Be it remarked that, when in tartans, Scott wore the trews, not the philabeg. Glengarry, whether in the philabeg or not, rode in the procession, followed by "*Tail*," pedestrians. The King, and Sir William Curtis, a stout dignitary of London town, both wore the Royal Stuart tartans, invented, it was said, for Prince Charles.

No Stuart king, of course, had ever worn the Highland costume, except in expeditions beyond the Highland line. These amusing pageantries were "making every brain dizzy but his own," when the death of Erskine, the mild, quiet, timid man who had been his dearest friend, fell upon Scott.

The main results of "the right royal row," as Scott called it, were that, by his suggestion, the attainders of 1715 and 1745 were redressed, and that Scott, pursued to Abbotsford by crowds of guests, appears to have suffered from a slight seizure of an apoplectic kind. "I have not been very well," he wrote to Terry in November, "a whoreson thickness of blood, and a depression of spirits arising from the loss of friends . . . have annoyed me much, and *Peveril* will, I fear, smell of the apoplexy." This, says Lockhart, is the first allusion to Sir Walter's fatal malady, the malady which had caused the death of his father. Lockhart suspected that he had sustained and concealed slight attacks of this nature. The machine was showing signs of overwork, which appear in the straggling *Peveril of the Peak* with its missed

opportunities. Yet *Quentin Durward* was in progress in company with *Peveril*, and there is no smell of the apoplexy in that stirring tale, which made Scott's fortune in France. The pictures of Louis XI, of his strange funereal servitors, of the delightful Le Balafré, a pendant of Dugald Dalgetty, with the bustling events of the story, have won popularity, though the romance, at first, was received with little enthusiasm. Perhaps this coldness, or a relapse into commonsense, made Constable announce that he would enter into no more bargains for books not only unchristened but unborn. The novels were appearing in uniform collected editions: the market was glutted. Scott thought of a set of dialogues on "superstitious" beliefs, such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and witchcraft, as an alternative to romance. But the public was, by this time, solely devoted to fiction. *Quentin Durward* too, began to sell in the old way, and Scott postponed his dealings with things

> On the margin grey
> 'Twixt the soul's life and day.

Scott had written no novel of contemporary

society since *The Antiquary*, and Laidlaw, on the Eildon hill above Melrose, suggested a romance of the little town, in the actual year, 1823. The hint resulted in *St. Ronan's Well* (December 1823); the scene is not Melrose, but the Spa of Innerleithen on the upper Tweed. The plot of *St. Ronan's Well* was paralyzed by the prudery of James Ballantyne. A mischance on the part of the heroine was suppressed, to please James, consequently there is no reason in life for Clara's ruined brain, or for anything else that is essential to the progress and conclusion of the narrative. There is a similar error, caused by a remonstrance from Jeffrey, in *Dombey and Son*, where the conduct of Edith towards Mr. Carker is inexplicable, as it is perfectly clear, from a passage which Dickens vainly tried to explain away, that Edith had been Mr. Carker's mistress. The third or fourth rate society of the Spa may be true to nature, but is neither convincing nor amusing, and Meg Dods cannot cover the multitude of sins of confusion in *St. Ronan's Well.* Miss Edgeworth wrote that the author of the last thirty pages of the book should be "car-

bonadoed," and, practically, James Ballantyne would have been the sufferer, for he was the only begetter of the "incredible and unaccountable conclusion."

Meanwhile a very different romance, the last of Scott's before ruin fell on him, was in progress, *Redgauntlet*. In *Redgauntlet* we may surely say that Scott has found himself again, at his best, or very nearly at his best. The form of narrative, partly told in letters, as by Richardson, is no longer popular, and we are not sorry when the author deserts it. The plot of the story is rather baffling, and, as the tale goes on, we almost forget our curiosity as to why Darsie Latimer should not go near the English border. The reason, when we do learn it, is far fetched, Darsie was not worth all that mechanism of intrigue. But the pictures of old Edinburgh life about 1763, of Scott's own father as the elder Fairford, with his good heart, and his "pernickety" ascetic lawyer's ways, is delightful. Peter Peebles, the litigant maddened by law and drink, is pathetic no less than humorous; if the legal business appears dull, it is, none the less, or perhaps the more,

Balzacian, supposing Balzac to have had the humour of Dumas. The Quakers are borrowed from what Scott saw, in boyhood, of a Quaker household at Kelso. Excellent is Geddes's non-resisting courage, and his shamefaced pride in his armorial bearings, the *ged*, or pike, the free-booter of fresh water. The scene of salmon spearing on the Solway flats is a description of a sport dear to Scott as pursued in a boat on Tweed. Things like huge snow-shoes were used in my boyhood, the spearman stood erect above the water, one foot in each wooden shoe, he could spear a fish between them, and the exercise demanded much gift of balance, and a cool head, while the torches flared above the swift black running waters. Green Mantle again recalls the *Manteau Vert* of Scott's youth. He borrowed the horse-shoe frown of old Redgauntlet from the face of the wicked witch, the sister of the Wizard, Major Weir, in the legend given by Sinclair, in " Satan's Invisible World Disclosed," and he also borrowed thence the name of the jackanapes in " Wandering Willie's Tale." The scenes in the mysterious Redgauntlet's cottage are as good romance as

those in the Provost's house at Dumfries, with the story of "Pate in Peril" are good comedy. The broken-hearted Nanty Ewart is full of an original pathos not common in Scott; his story of his own life of miserable adventure, with the foreknowledge of his doom, is a masterpiece, and as a masterpiece "the fallen and faded Ascanius" of the tale, Prince Charles, the battered stately wanderer, with the despotic mistress, was universally accepted.

There is evidence that the Prince really did pursue his fleeting vision of a crown into England, in 1763, and was actually seen by Murray, the actor, a friend of Scott's, then a boy. When the Prince was in England, in disguise, there is always a complete break in his correspondence, and I find such a gap at this period. He still had a few adherents, and would stray across the Channel to see and frighten them, and slip back again to his hermit life at Bouillon. Miss Walkinshaw, the original of the lady who accompanies him in the tale, had forsaken him at the date of the romance, and she was not a fair but a dark beauty. There is a mournful grace in Charles'

last good-bye to the few Jacobite gentry who surround him in the novel when " there was an end of an auld song." The romance " contains perhaps more of the author's personal experiences than any other, or even than all of them put together." As for " Wandering Willie's Tale," the corrections and admirable additions in the proof sheets show that this *chef d'oeuvre*, unlike " the rest of them," was written with all the care that it deserved. If it has anything to be called a rival, that rival is Mr. Stevenson's story of about the same period, in the latest dusk of the day of the Covenant, *Thrawn Janet*. But there is no rivalry—Scott's legend is unapproachable.

There was but this one novel in 1824; if Scott's advisers concealed from him the relative slackness of his sales, they did not hesitate to warn him against " over-cropping." He wrote his tribute to Byron, on the news of the poet's death, and he worked at a new edition of his *Swift*. As a Director of the Edinburgh Academy, founded in this year, Scott remarked that he did not love his country better than truth, and that Dr. Johnson was

not wholly wrong when he said that, in learning, "every Scot had a mouthful and none had a bellyful." Boys were now to learn Greek earlier, and to learn more Greek than in his own days at the High School. In fact the new school has produced some Grecians of merit and distinction in its eighty years of existence. Scott did not tell the boys that of Greek he had less than Shakespeare, and he despised the contemptible clamour over his own famous brace of false quantities in the two elegiac lines for the epitaph of his deerhound Maida. One of the false quantities, after all, was the fault of a transcriber who wrote "jaces" in place of "dormis"; that transcriber was James Ballantyne. "We could have written as good longs and shorts as the English, if it had not been for the — Covenant," an old gentleman used to say, but Porson opened Buchanan on a false quantity, and surely Dr. Pitcairn erred when he began his famous epitaph on Dundee (admirably Englished into poetry by Dryden)—"*Ultime Scotorum.*" Yet he could hardly write *Ultime Pictorum*, and so save his prosody at the expense of his ethnology.

"Surely if Sir Walter Scott be not a happy man, which he seems truly to be, he deserves to be so," wrote Basil Hall at Abbotsford in the Christmas of 1824. January 7, 1825, saw "the first regular ball given at Abbotsford—and the last. As in *Marmion*,

It was his blithest and his last.

The occasion of the festivity was the wedding of Scott's eldest son, a young cavalry officer "of strict and even severe principles," to a Miss Jobson, of Lochore, "with a fortune of £50,000 in land." The name of Jobson is neither suggestive of wealth nor of heraldic additions to the quarterings of the Scotts. Sir Walter speaks of his daughter-in-law with unconcealed affection; she was a pretty, shy, candid, innocent girl, in the manner of Rose Bradwardine. The lovers lately wed crossed to Ireland, where the Regiment was quartered, and whither Scott himself went for a holiday later in 1825. Scott now backed the credit of his friend, the actor manager Terry, for £1,250, plus £500 guaranteed by James Ballantyne. Whosoever lends a friend money for the pur-

poses of his business is absolutely certain to see no more of the coins, and to lend Terry money, Terry being a manager and lessee of a theatre, was laying the longest possible odds on a hopeless horse. Like Steenie denouncing incontinence, and Baby Charles reproving dissimulation, Scott read Terry a lecture against raising money by bills and discounts, a ruinous system, he declared, very wisely, which was assiduously practised by Constable, and Ballantyne & Co.

Constable now had a new project, which Lockhart describes with infinite humour. We have mentioned evidence given before a Parliamentary Commission, to the effect that libraries ceased to be formed about the time when *Waverley* appeared (1814). The same evidence showed that real books had never prospered since cheap little volumes of boiled down information, the tinned meats of the intellectual life, were introduced. It was Constable who now introduced them. He came out to Abbotsford enormously big with a project. He unloaded himself of a packet, the annual schedule of assessed taxes. From the items of taxes paid on many things which profit

not, such as hair powder, he inferred, justly, that the British public spent money on every thing conceivable, except books. Hundreds of thousands of people had obviously plenty of money, and in the article of books alone did they economize. Scott remarked that all down Tweed were the houses of lairds of whom none spent £10 yearly on literature. Of course they did not, and of course they do not, and never will. One extravagance our countrymen and countrywomen avoid, as they would the devil, and that is buying a book. They are like the Highland crofter who was implored to give at least five shillings to the "Sustentation Fund," and for the salvation of his immortal part. "Me give five shillings to save my soul! I haena five shillings to buy mysel' tobacco!"

Constable admitted that the gentry were content with a magazine, and, at most, a subscription to a circulating library. But *he* would produce books so cheap and good that even the gentry would buy them. To the sanguine soul of the projector this seemed a splendid speculation, though even he did not think of sinking to a sixpenny price. Monthly

volumes at half-a-crown or three-and-sixpence were in his eye, as if the public could afford to give nearly forty shillings annually for books. The public "has not time," setting the pecuniary extravagance aside, to read twelve volumes yearly. However Scott accepted the golden dream, and proposed a short *Life of Napoleon*. It grew into ten tomes of Constable's *Miscellany*, and was mainly written after Sir Walter's ruin, in eighteen months. A critic mentions a dozen people then alive in England, including Carlyle, who could have done a better *Life of Napoleon*. Perhaps they could have done it, "if they had the mind," but certainly they could not have done it better than Scott, in eighteen months. Constable provided about a hundred volumes of *Le Moniteur*, and quantities of printed works, as materials, while MSS. were collected. But no *Life* written at that time could be satisfactory; most documents were inaccessible, and Scott made great use of second-hand authorities. Though the book won £18,000 for Sir Walter's creditors, and though it is very readable, the task work (and few forms of drudgery are so tedious

as history writing in a hurry) did not suit Scott, and adds nothing to his reputation.

Meanwhile he wrote *The Betrothed*, which Ballantyne discouraged, and *The Talisman*, a work as pleasing to boyhood as *Ivanhoe*. We all have been fond of Coeur de Lion, and hated Conrad de Montferrat, and adored Saladin. The book was amazingly popular, and *Woodstock* was undertaken next, and finished when the evil days began. Scott now made a pleasant tour in Ireland, and visited Wordsworth on his homeward way. The two poets eternally quoted the Bard of Rydal, but not the most distant allusion was made by either, says Lockhart, to the verses of the Minstrel of the Forest. On returning to Abbotsford it was a sad sight for Lockhart to see Sir Walter "read, note, and index with the pertinacity of some pale compiler in the British Museum," for the *Napoleon*, and rising from his toil, "not radiant and buoyant," but with an aching brow and weary eyes. Lockhart himself was leaving Scotland for London, and the editorial chair of *The Quarterly Review*. The shadows were thickening in the prison house, and the health

of Scott's grandson, Lockhart's son, was of all the shadows the deepest. There were to be no more happy summers in the cottage of Chiefswood—the scene, many years later, of happiness *cujus pars fui*. In November 1825, Lockhart, in London, wrote a long letter to Scott on rumours unfavourable to Constable's solvency. He anticipated nothing worse for Scott than the loss of the price of *Woodstock*. Returning to Chiefswood, he received a letter of warning, and showed it to Scott, who made a night journey to see Constable, who reassured him. Lockhart now suspected that Scott was deeply concerned in his publisher's affairs. On November 20 Scott began his famous *Journal*, now published in full. On December 22 he wrote *Bonny Dundee*, new words to an old tune, accompanying ribald words, in which the town, not the Viscount of Dundee, is "bonny." "I wonder if the verses are good," Scott notes, and laments poor Will Erskine—"thou couldst and wouldst have told me." The song is his latest and not least splendid tribute to Claverhouse, and rings across the Empire with its "cavalry canter."

On Christmas Day Scott wrote, "I have a particular call for gratitude." "Thus does Fortune banter us." The earliest notes of 1826 show Scott already anxious about the money affairs of Ballantyne and Constable. They also (January 5) show him "much alarmed" by a sudden attack of *agraphia*, impotence to write the words he would. He explained this as the result of an anodyne, for his old complaint had returned with its cruel agonies. On January 11 there is "anxious botheration about the money market." On January 14 there comes a mysterious letter from Constable, then in London, where he made to Lockhart wild proposals for advances of huge sums by Scott. On January 16, in Edinburgh, the blow fell. "Hurst and Robinson let a bill come back upon Constable." Nevertheless Scott dined with Mr. Skene of Rubislaw, whose little daughter, recently dead at a great age, regretted by all who knew her, was a child friend and consoler of Sir Walter. Next day came James Ballantyne "with a face as black as the crook": Ballantyne & Co. must suspend payment. Scott at once consulted Mr. John

Gibson, W.S., and, as he would not consent to be made bankrupt, his affairs were put under trustees, acting for the creditors. If bankrupt, his financial position would improve, his future gains would be his own. But he at once braced himself to pay off everybody, pledging brain and life to that colossal task. He did not as yet know the full extent of his losses.

By the admission of one of Ballantyne's trustees, the books of the firm, eleven years later, were still unbalanced. Into the affair of the bills and counter bills between Ballantyne and Constable, whereby, according to Lockhart, Scott's business debts were doubled, it is not possible to go in this place. Ballantyne's representatives regarded the whole story as the result of a confusion in the mind of Lockhart. But Lockhart's source was Mr. Cadell, the partner of Constable, and Mr. Cadell, in 1837, stood by his guns, and sent confirmatory documents. "John Ballantyne suggested the double bills!"[1] Scott never blamed James Ballantyne, who owed to him, he said, his difficulties in the present as well as his pros-

[1] *Life of Lockhart*, ii. pp. 146–150.

perity in the past. But the books of the firm were never balanced! Without balance-sheets, and there were none, how could Scott know the amount of his liabilities? But, again, why did he not extort accounts from the lazy James? Lockhart himself meted out the blame to all concerned, as far as his knowledge, instructed by Mr. Cadell, enabled him to do. He was blamed by the Press for making precisely the statements which he never made. Scott, to his own loss, insisted on employing James Ballantyne alone as his printer after 1826. But he transferred his publishing business from Constable to Cadell, with good reason. Constable "was all spectral together." As late as 1851 Lockhart wrote that "the details of Scott's commercial perplexities remain in great measure inexplicable." Scott himself (January 29) writes: "Constable's business seems unintelligible . . . neither stock nor debt to show. No doubt trading almost entirely on accommodation is dreadfully expensive." So Scott had just warned Terry!

From his old rival, Sir William Forbes, from the Royal Bank, from an unknown person,

offering £30,000, Scott had many proffers of assistance. But he took the whole debt, £117,000, on his own shoulders, he borrowed from no man, he lived retired, and worked at *Woodstock* steadily throughout the days which brought Job's messengers of ruin. "I experience a sort of determined pleasure," he said to Skene, "in confronting the very worst aspect of this sudden reverse. . . ." His mind was free from the awful apprehension caused by his attack of *agraphia*. "Few have more reason to feel grateful to the Disposer of all than I have." Any spleen which Scott may have felt, he worked off in *Malachi Malagrowther's Letters*, a criticism of an effort made by his own party to dethrone the Scot's one pound note, the Palladium of the ancient kingdom.

On March 15 Scott left his house in Castle Street for the last time. *Ha til mi tulidh*—"I return no more!" The words are those of the lament of Macleod's second-sighted piper, foreseeing his own fall in The Rout of Moy (1746). At Abbotsford he finished *Woodstock* on March 26. The book sold for £8,228, a first instalment of the Sisyphean task of payment.

Tastes differ, but to myself *Woodstock* seems to possess great merits. Considering the circumstances in which it was written, it is a wonderful book. Cromwell is not the conventional hypocrite of the then current estimate: he is a religious man, something of a mystic, involved in politics, and displaying the habitual "jesuitry" of political religious men. Wildrake is a tipsy cavalier of the best, and of the best in his song for King Charles. The various Puritan officers, and their various conduct in face of the *poltergeist*, or noisy devil of Woodstock, are excellently discriminated. Scott never could remember where he read that "Funny Joe of Oxford" confessed to being the *poltergeist*, nor have I been able to discover his source. My earliest trace of the explanation is in Joseph Taylor's *Apparitions* (1815, Second Edition). Taylor gives us Funny Joe Collins, his *pulvis fulminans*, and all the rest of it, almost in the same words as Scott's, who must have possessed Taylor's book. But who goes bail for Funny Joe? If he did make a confession, how did it escape Dr. Plot, whose *Natural History of Oxfordshire* is one of Scott's

authorities? What Joe Collins may or may not have said is not evidence, but what does common sense care for evidence, when an explanation is wanted?

The plot of *Woodstock* was unconsciously annexed by Thackeray in *Esmond*. His charming but historically absurd James III is Charles II, laughing and running after every girl, and making love to the sister and mistress of the two good Royalists who protect him. Lockwood and his sweetheart, in *Esmond*, are Jocelyn and his sweetheart in *Woodstock*. James III is a more favoured lover than his uncle, and Beatrix outshines all the women of Scott, but Scott's is the invention of the situation, down to the King's offer of a duel. It is an astonishing case of unconscious appropriation—and improvement at the expense of the character of James, "the best of kings and men," but the least humorous. I profess myself an admirer of Trusty Tompkins, that unworthy Independent; of Corporal Humgudgeon; of the noble Sir Henry Lee; and of his hound Bevis; of Wildrake, of the *mise en scène*, of Cromwell, in short of *Woodstock* in general. But these

opinions are the accidents of personal likings, beyond which criticism, however it may disguise them, never finds it easy to go.

Scott now began *The Chronicles of the Canongate*, with Cadell for publisher. Constable was "spectral": he had tried to borrow large sums from Scott, "after all chance of recovery was over," says Lockhart. But to the sanguine Constable it could not seem that all chance was over. Long ago he had bought Hunter out of his business at a vast over-estimate, from which he never recovered. To act thus was in his nature; we must not suppose him to have been in any degree dishonest. The *Chronicles* and *Napoleon* now went on together, while (May 2) Scott "almost despaired" of his wife's recovery from illness. "Still she welcomes me with a smile, and insists she is better." She could not take leave of him, when he was obliged to leave Abbotsford for dingy lodgings in Edinburgh. On May 15 he heard of the death of Lady Scott. "I am deprived of the sharer of my thoughts and counsels. . . . She is sentient and conscious of my emotions somewhere—

somehow; *where*, we cannot tell, *how*, we cannot tell; yet I would not at this moment resign the mysterious yet certain hope that I shall see her in a better world, for all that this world can give me." He writes of his lonely study: "Poor Charlotte would have been in the room half a score of times to see if the fire burned, and ask a hundred kind questions." Such were the relations of husband and wife. He turned to his story of *The Highland Widow*: there was "no rest for Sir Walter." "I will not be dethroned by any rebellious passion that raises its standard against me."

Scott visited London and Paris, partly in the interests of his *Napoleon*. In February 1827, at a dinner to William Murray, the actor, he acknowledged what could no longer be concealed, his authorship of the novels. By June 10, 1827, the "millstone" of *Napoleon* was off his back. He and his amanuensis had been used to work from six in the morning to six in the evening, without interruption except for meals. No doubt there might have been better historians of the world's greatest genius, but who else would have worked a twelve

hours' day—and all for the sake of duty and honour? Lockhart computes that twelve months were occupied in the writing. Between the end of 1825 and the June of 1827, Scott had written off £28,000 of his debts. To wipe them out, not to produce an impeccable biography, was his aim, it must be admitted, but we must remember that his general health was now very bad, with insomnia and severe headaches.

August 1827 brought news that General Gourgaud was indignant about Scott's remarks on him in his *Napoleon*. Scott had told what he found in our State Papers: "I should have been a shameful coward if I had shunned using them." Gourgaud had already fought Ségur, the brilliant historian of the Moscow expedition. It may be that Gourgaud's information given to the English Government, about Napoleon in St. Helena, was a "blind," not a betrayal: one does not suspect his loyalty. Scott rejected this excuse, as convicting Gourgaud of falsehood, "when giving evidence upon his word of honour." Scott was ready to give him a meeting: chose his old friend, Clerk, as

his second, and saw that Napoleon's own pistols, which he possessed, were in order. "I will not baulk him, Jackie! He shall not dishonour the country through my sides, I can assure him." "The courage of bards," according to a Gaelic proverb, is a minus quantity. Scott was not to justify the proverb: if he did not fight, he said, he would "die the death of a poisoned rat in a hole, out of mere sense of my own degradation."

Mr. Hutton is severe on Scott for this unchristian conduct. Probably, at the same date, and in similar circumstances, Mr. Hutton would have been found "on the sod." The ideas of the age made fighting unavoidable, and, as for the sin, Scott would rather trust his soul with God than his honour to men, as Jeanne d'Arc said, after leaping from her prison tower, that she would rather commit her soul to God than her honour to the English. Gourgaud made "a fiery rejoinder" to Scott's plain and invincible statement of his case. Scott did not reply in any way, he did not challenge Gourgaud, who himself had chivalry enough, or good sense enough, to send no cartel. In

fact one does not see how he could escape from his dilemma. He had betrayed his master, or he had been guilty of a dubious stratagem.

Scott thought of taking sanctuary in Holyrood precincts from, not Gourgaud, but a Hebrew creditor named Abud, who insisted on receiving at once the full measure of his due. Sir William Forbes settled the affair privately, and Scott did not need to dwell where his hero, Croftangry, abides, in *The Chronicles of the Canongate*, now published. The autobiographical part, in Croftangry, is as excellent as it is melancholy. The book was well received, and *The Fair Maid of Perth*, the last of his good novels, was begun. The pictures of burgess life, and of the distracted Court, are excellent. Poor Oliver Proudfute is a good comic character with a tragic end. The fighting Smith, with his love of poetry and romance, is a most original and sympathetic person, and Simon the Glover is as good as a father, citizen, and friend, as Sir Patrick Charteris is in the quality of knightly Provost. The Fair Maid, when she deigns to be natural, is very natural indeed; the Clan fight is one of the best in fiction, and

in Connacher, who " has drunk the milk of the white doe," his foster mother, Scott expiates his extreme harshness to a ne'er-do-well brother, who had shown the white feather in the West Indies. This harshness he bitterly repented. With the terrible true story of the Duke of Rothesay's doom, with Ramorny and Bonthron and Dwining for villains, with the studies of the good helpless Roi Fainéant, Albany, Douglas, and poor Louise, and with the scene of the chief's funeral, *The Fair Maid of Perth* abounds in merits, pressed down and running over. Even Father Clement (whom Scott does not quite like), with the fanaticism that attended the Reformation from the first, and with a touch of " Jesuitry," is well drawn, and how excellent is the Glover's account of what he liked in the Father's sermons, his denunciations of the rabble and the nobles, and his appreciation of the Scottish middle class—absurdly said to have been a creation of John Knox. Commerce, not religion, made the burghs and the burghers, who liked to listen to Father Clement, " proving, as it seemed to me, that the sole virtue of our commonweal,

its strength, and its estimation, lay among the burgher craft of the better class, which I received as comfortable doctrine, and creditable to the town."

Scott ends with commendations of Father Clement, but he liked the man no more than he says that Simon Glover did. As a politician, he was even unscrupulously opposed to Catholics, as being under priestly dominion no less than the Covenanters were under preachers' dominion. He would have no *imperium in imperio*. But, in his novels, the old faith is spoken of so tenderly that George Borrow frequently and intemperately accuses him of betraying souls to the

> Lady in Babylon bred,
> Addicted to flirting and dressing in red.

He regarded our victory at Navarino as very well, but our policy as on the level of what that of the Turks would have been, had they sent a plenipotentiary to regulate our behaviour towards the Irish Catholics.

The December of 1827 saw the publication of the tiny square volumes of *The Tales of a*

Grandfather, addressed to Lockhart's son, "Master Hugh Littlejohn." They had an appropriate result: the small boy dirked his brother (not seriously) with a pair of scissors, and requested Scott to write no more about Civilization, "he dislikes it extremely." One remembers how tiresome were the chapters on Civilization, except that on the Feudal System. Of the little that the world used to know about Scottish history, three-quarters were learned from *The Tales of a Grandfather*. Necessarily much more "scientific" information has since been acquired, and Mr. Fraser Tytler's *History* is a monument of impartial industry. But Scott, as impartial as Tytler, gives us the cream of the anecdotes and semi-historical legends, which are what everybody ought to know. He does not disdain the garrulous Pitscottie, and the lively memoirs of Sir James Melville, these pillars of "history, as she is wrote," and ought not, scientifically speaking, to be written any longer.

Yet there are senses in which *The Tales of a Grandfather* are scientifically composed. There is little science in writing books so dull that no



SIR WALTER SCOTT.

After the painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence.

mortal can read them, and this reef ahead of the modern pedant Scott successfully avoids. He lets "the violet of a legend blow" in periods of the utmost aridity, he "loads every reef," however granitic, with the gold of every anecdote that reveals the character of individuals or of the time. If a scrap of ballad illustrates his topic, he has that scrap in his wallet. Thus the great Montrose fought for a sacred cause, the wretched Lord Lewis Gordon, an unworthy leader of a clan of soldiers, fought from caprice. The ballad verse runs,

> If you with Lord Lewis go,
> You'll get reif and prey enough,
> If you with Montrose go,
> You'll get grief and wae enough—

hard won victories and forced marches. Scott's treatment of that battlefield of rival sentimentalists, Kirk and Cavalier—the time of the Civil War and the Restoration—is marked by lucidity, conciseness, and impartiality. Any boy of ten can understand it if he pleases, and the writer flatters neither Presbyterian nor King's man.

I quote what he says about the surrender of

the King to the English by the Scots at Newcastle. The position of the Scots Commissioners was perplexing, whether they deliberately lured Charles to come to them or not. They could not keep him in Scotland: they would have had to fight England, and to defy the preachers who rode them. They could not safely let Charles embark secretly at Tynemouth, as Sir Walter suggests: the prospect of a King over the water was agreeable neither to the English nor to the Covenanters. But, says Scott, "Even if the Scots had determined that the exigencies of the times, and the necessity of preserving the peace betwixt England and Scotland, together with their engagements with the Parliament of England, demanded that they should surrender the person of their King to that body, the honour of Scotland was intimately concerned in so conducting the transaction that there should be no room for alleging that any selfish advantage was stipulated by the Scots as a consequence of giving him up. I am almost ashamed to write that this honourable consideration had no weight.

"The Scottish army had a long arrear of pay

due to them from the English Parliament, which the latter had refused, or at least delayed to make forthcoming. A treaty for the settlement of these arrears had been set on foot; and it had been agreed that the Scottish forces should retreat into their own country, upon payment of two hundred thousand pounds, which was one half of the debt finally admitted. Now, it is true that these two treaties, concerning the delivery of the King's person to England and the payment by Parliament of their pecuniary arrears to Scotland, were kept separate, for the sake of decency; but it is certain that they not only coincided in point of time, but bore upon and influenced each other. No man of candour will pretend to believe that the Parliament of England would ever have paid this considerable sum, unless to facilitate their obtaining possession of the King's person; and this sordid and base transaction, though the work exclusively of a mercenary army, stamped the whole nation of Scotland with infamy. In foreign countries they were upbraided with the shame of having made their unfortunate and confiding Sove-

reign a hostage, whose liberty or surrender was to depend on their obtaining payment of a paltry sum of arrears; and the English nation reproached them with their greed and treachery, in the popular rhyme,—

> Traitor Scot
> Sold his king for a groat.

"The Scottish army surrendered the person of Charles to the Commissioners for the English Parliament, on receiving security for their arrears of pay, and immediately evacuated Newcastle, and marched for their own country. I am sorry to conclude the volume with this mercenary and dishonourable transaction; but the limits of the work require me to bring it thus to a close."

By their Covenant, as interpreted by their preachers, the Scots had brought themselves to this pass, and the only course open to them which was not conspicuously base they did not take. A nation is judged by the rulers whom it accepts, and though not a man in a hundred, north of Tweed, approved the course (so a contemporary tells us), "the whole nation of

Scotland was stamped with infamy." Scott does not prefer Scotland to truth, but he does misrepresent, by defect of information, the effectual cause of Argyll's death. He did not die merely because he expressed, in letters to Monk, "a zeal for the English interest." He gave information as to the movements of the forces that stood for his King, and were commanded by his own son. Writing for the instruction of the young Scott laid aside all Cavalier sentiment and prejudice; in the opinion of M. Amédée Pichot, he wrote as a Whig. But the Whigamores have never welcomed him as an ally. Even to-day a student who "has no time" cannot gain so rapid and so correct a view of Scottish history from any book as he will find in *The Tales of a Grandfather*.

Sir Walter's next task was the *Magnum Opus*, the preparation of a literary history of the work of his life, especially of the novels and poems. That history took the shape, not wholly fortunate, of new Introductions and new notes. They are of the most genial interest, but perhaps it would have been wiser to write the literary

history in separate volumes, than to clog the Authors' Favourite Edition with so much prefatory matter that the modern reader is frightened away, believing that he will never survive to read the romance in each case. The *format* and typography of the volumes were excellent, the plates were not better than most illustrations and rather worse than some. Cadell had bought in the copyright at £8,500 on the luckiest of days for Sir Walter's creditors. Now it was that Scott, having no money to give to a Reverend Mr. Gordon, gave him the copyright of two sermons which he had already written for him, at a moment when he feared that Gordon was too ill and nervous to write sermons for himself. Gordon sold the copyright for £250. Scott disliked appearing as a lay preacher, but good nature carried the day. He would not, however, again oblige James Ballantyne, who pleaded for the life of Oliver Proudfute, in *The Fair Maid of Perth*. To please James he had ruined *St. Ronan's Well*, he had brought back Athelstane in *Ivanhoe* from the dead, and that was enough, and more than enough.

The year 1829 saw the completion of *Anne of Geierstein*, but as the author of Anne's being frankly damned her, I am not inclined to plead in her favour, leaving her advocacy to Mr. Saintsbury, who places Anne "on a level with anything and above most things later than *The Pirate*." To deem *Anne* on a level with *Redgauntlet*, or even with *Woodstock*, and *The Fair Maid of Perth*, seems, in Lethington's words, "a devout imagination." My friend, Mr. Saintsbury, indeed speaks here of *Anne* "as a mere romance," not counting "the personal touches which exalt *Redgauntlet* and the Introduction to the *Chronicles*." But what is there in *Anne* that comes home to us like Nanty Ewart, Wandering Willie, and Peter Peebles? No Scot can doubt that Sir Walter is at his best in the bounds of "his ain countrie," this was an inevitable limitation of his genius.

The *Journal* of the early months of 1829 shows Scott in good spirits, pleased with solitude, when he is alone, but only if solitude does not mean lack of access to human company. In a little sportive dialogue with a Geni, or

Djinn, he confesses to all his old delight in building castles in the air. "You need not repent," says the Djinn, "most of your novels have previously been subjects for airy castles." This means that, rapidly as the novels were written, they, or many of them, had long simmered in the author's imagination: he had *lived*, he remarks, in the scenes and adventures which he describes. Among other things, he now wrote, for Croker's *Boswell's Johnson*, notes on the great Doctor's Scottish tour. Busy as Sir Walter was, his time and work were still at the disposal of others. But some of these invaluable notes went astray in the post, and never were recovered. He wrote a short *History of Scotland*, for the Encyclopaedia of Thackeray's victim, Dr. Lardner, and a review article to raise a sum of money for the ever unlucky Gillies, who visited Abbotsford in autumn, and noted one convenience 'very rare,' he says, in country houses. In every room was abundance of pen, ink, and paper.

In Edinburgh, at the levee of the Commissioner to the General Assembly, Scott met Edward Irving. "I could hardly keep my

eyes off him while we were at table. He put me in mind of the devil disguised as an angel of light, so ill did that horrible obliquity of vision harmonize with the dark tranquil features of his face, resembling that of our Saviour in Italian pictures, with the hair carefully arranged in the same manner. . . . He spoke with that kind of unction which is nearly allied to cajolerie. . . ." In fact Scott liked Irving no more than he liked Father Clement. He had a great distrust of "enthusiasm" in religion, but Irving was not the quack whom Scott clearly suspected him of being. Other quacks, in his opinion, were the two brothers, then calling themselves "Hay Allan," but later, "John and Charles Stuart," sons of a son of Prince Charles by his wife. These gentlemen possessed a MS. called *Vestiarium Scoticum*, giving an account of the tartans of the Border as well as of the Highland clans, tartans otherwise unknown. There were two MSS., one, never seen of men, of the sixteenth century, another, still extant, of the eighteenth century. This MS. remains a mystery. I believe that neither in ink nor paper is there any trace of

falsity, while the style is certainly beyond the powers of imitation possessed by the two brothers, in whose antiquarian probity Scott had no belief.

Scott's friends were dying around him, Shortreed of the Liddesdale rambles, and Tom Purdie. *Haec poena diu viventibus!* His Diary flags in July, and is not reopened till May 1830. Scott read and reviewed that thrilling book, Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials*. It was published by the Bannatyne Club, of which Scott was the animating spirit; for the Roxburghe Club he edited and presented the story of the Master of Sinclair, and his slaying of the Shaws of Greenock (1708). He dramatized the tale, from Pitcairn, of the Auchendrane Tragedy, the series of murders by the two Mures. There is much of spirit, fancy, and vigorous verse in *The Ayrshire Tragedy*, but the topic inevitably lacked dramatic interest.

It was on February 15, 1831, that the long threatened blow of paralysis fell on Sir Walter. He was alone, with a lady, examining her father's manuscripts, when his face altered, he fell into a chair, but with the instinct of

courtesy, contrived to stagger from the room and fell in the drawing-room, where his daughter Anne and Lockhart's sister, Violet, happened to be.[1] He presently recovered speech, and, when he went abroad again, people observed no change. But he knew his own case. None the less, he toiled on at his *Letters on Demonology*, a work well worth reading, though marked by failing powers. That astonishing person, Professor Wilson, instantly attacked Scott, making the Shepherd in *Noctes Ambrosianae* speak of "Sir Walter wi' his everlasting anecdotes, nine out o' ten meaning naething, and the tenth itsel' as auld as Eildon Hill." Wilson also assailed the *Letters*: there was a great deal of Mr. Hyde in his composition, an element which broke out in furious attacks on old friends. Yet he never estranged Lockhart.

Scott declared that he felt no mental feebleness, and hoped that by 1835 he might clear off his debts; he had just paid £15,000 towards that end. He received a kind of pro-

[1] Miss Ferrier published a painful narrative of these occurrences.

posal of marriage from a woman of rank, through her brother: he was told that he might hope! But he confided to his *Journal* that he did not hope to wed "a grim grenadier." His creditors restored to him his books, plate, furniture, and collection of works of art and curios, which he valued at £10,000. He resigned his Clerkship in November 1830, receiving a pension of £840. The change was unfortunate, as it gave him more time for overwork. Meanwhile, every letter from Ballantyne about his new novels betrayed its effect in nervous twitchings at the mouth. Cadell, to give him rest, suggested the composition of an anecdotic catalogue of his curiosities, "The Gabions of Jonathan Oldbuck." A glance at the opening of the MS., with its paralytic writing and examples of *agraphia*, shows how desperate was his mental and bodily condition for a short while.

Yet he was now thinking of *Castle Dangerous*, and he wrote a Tory pamphlet which, his advisers saw, showed ignorance of the political situation. The pamphlet was dropped, but his advisers had a struggle before they carried

their point. "Sir Walter never recovered it," says Mr. Cadell. I have no heart to speak of his political apprehensions and sufferings. What he feared was the overthrow of Society; what he endured from popular insult and even violence is too familiarly known. Certain excited and rude artisans had no more respect than Wilson for an old friend, the glory of the Border. Scott never forgot the scene, it haunted his dying hours. He acknowledged to a distinct stroke of paralysis in April 1831, and Cadell and Ballantyne remonstrated against the conclusion of *Count Robert of Paris*.

How amazing was the humour that supported his unconquerable courage! His letters—for example one of October 31, to Lady Louisa Stuart, on "Animal Magnetism," show him in full force of intellect. He had an attack in November, and Laidlaw, his amanuensis for *Count Robert of Paris*, observed unmistakable signs of the end. He was bidden to drink water only, and to abandon writing. So he notes, in a parody of Burns :—

> Dour, dour, and eident was he,
> Dour and eident, but and ben,

Dour against their barley water,
And eident on the Bramah pen.[1]

In July Scott began *Castle Dangerous*, and paid his last visit to the tombs of the Douglases. The country people received him gladly, following him in a procession. I must quote what Lockhart says about the close of this day, spent beside the graves of that stern and haughty race who had been, now the savers, now the betrayers, of their country.

"It was again a darkish, cloudy day, with some occasional mutterings of distant thunder, and perhaps the state of the atmosphere told upon Sir Walter's nerves; but I had never before seen him so sensitive as he was all the morning after this inspection of Douglas. As we drove over the high tableland of Lesmahago he repeated I know not how many verses from Winton, Barbour, and Blind Harry, with, I believe, almost every stanza of Dunbar's elegy on the deaths of the Makers (poets). It was now that I saw him, such as he paints himself in one or two passages of his Diary, but such as his companions in the meridian vigour of

[1] *Eident*, of course, means "eager."



SIR WALTER SCOTT.
From the painting by Sir Edwin Landseer, R.A.

his life never saw him—'the rushing of a brook, or the sighing of the summer breeze, bringing the tears into his eyes not unpleasantly.' Bodily weakness laid the delicacy of the organization bare, over which he had prided himself in wearing a sort of half-stoical mask. High and exalted feelings, indeed, he had never been able to keep concealed, but he had shrunk from exhibiting to human eye the softer and gentler emotions which now trembled to the surface. He strove against it even now, and presently came back from the Lament of the Makers to his Douglasses, and chanted, rather than repeated, in a sort of deep and glowing, though not distinct recitative, his first favourite among all the ballads—

> It was about the Lammas tide,
> When husbandmen do win their hay,
> That the doughty Douglas bownde him to ride
> To England to drive a prey,

down to the closing stanzas, which again left him in tears—

> My wound is deep—I fain would sleep—
> Take thou the vanguard of the three,

And hide me beneath the bracken-bush
That grows on yonder lily lee . . .
This deed was done at the Otterburne,
About the dawning of the day.
Earl Douglas was buried by the bracken-bush,
And the Percy led captive away.

The new Whig Government put a ship of war at the service of their great antagonist. He was to visit Italy, and Cadell kept the type of his two last tales set up; they were revised and altered in Scott's absence abroad. One incident in *Count Robert of Paris*, an incident terribly expressive of the author's condition, was expunged. Sir Walter felt the consolatory delusion that he had succeeded in his task, that his debts were paid. The last autumn at Abbotsford was full of the charm of sunset. Turner came, and painted Abbotsford on a tea tray, at a picnic. Young Walter Scott came, a joy to his father's eyes, "a handsomer fellow never put foot into stirrup." Wordsworth, too, was there, as his verses on Yarrow testify, and his noble sonnet—

A trouble, not of clouds or weeping rain.

On the voyage to Italy Scott still was writing,

the *Journal*, letters, the tale of *Il Bizarro*, the novel of *The Knights of Malta*; the manuscript is still the old closely serried manuscript, but the handwriting is wofully altered. I am informed that many passages are full of the old spirit, but care has been taken that this work shall never appear as a "literary curiosity."

At Naples Scott heard of Goethe's death. "At least he died at home. Let us to Abbotsford!" The party, with Mr. Charles Scott, passed on to Rome. At Lake Avernus, which, says Lockhart, is like a Highland loch, Scott repeated—

> We daurna go a' milking
> For Charlie and his men.

The classic scene reminded him of his dear hills. At Rome, with great difficulty, he visited the tomb of James III. (so his epitaph proclaims him,) and of Prince Charles and the Cardinal Duke of York; the latest minstrel stood by the dust of the last of the royal line. The rest "can hardly be told too briefly," says Lockhart.

In passing through Germany, Scott wrote

what his son Charles endorses as "The last letter written by my dear father." It is a brief note of courtesy to Arthur Schopenhauer, the famous philosopher, regretting that he was too unwell to receive Schopenhauer's visit. The note is clearly written and well expressed. It is in the Laing MSS. in Edinburgh University Library. Once again Scott wrote, or tried to write, in the packet boat crossing the Channel. Pen and ink were borrowed for him from Mrs. Sherwood, the author of *The Fairchild Family*.

The sufferer reached London on June 13, 1832. On July 7 he took ship for Leith. On July 11 he travelled by carriage to Abbotsford, waking from his torpor as they drove down Gala water, past Torwoodlee. Arrived, his dogs welcomed him, and "he alternately sobbed and smiled over them till sleep oppressed him." In his last days he was heard to murmur passages from the Bible, the Litany, the Scottish metrical psalms, and the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*. It was on September 17 that he bade Lockhart "be a good man, my dear, be virtuous, be religious, be a good man."

On the twenty-first "he breathed his last in the presence of all his children. It was a beautiful day—so warm that every window was wide open—and so perfectly still that the sound of all others most delicious to his ear, the gentle ripple of the Tweed over its pebbles, was distinctly audible as we knelt around his bed, and his eldest son kissed and closed his eyes."

He sleeps, with Lockhart at his feet, where the sound of the Border water fills the roofless aisles of the abbey of Dryburgh.

* * * *

"Good-night, Sir Walter!"

Scott had given his life to pay his debts. Of these he actually repaid about £70,000 between 1826 and 1832. The rest was wiped away by his copyrights, through the spirited and judicious management of Mr. Cadell, by the exertions of Lockhart as editor, and by the profits of Lockhart's *Life of Scott*. As to the later fortunes of Sir Walter's family, but one of his grandchildren survived; she married Mr. Hope Scott, the eminent barrister, and was the mother of the Honourable Mrs.

Maxwell-Scott, an only child, *spes exigua et extrema*. This lady has evinced the ancestral love of history in her works, *The Tragedy of Fotheringhay*, in her essays, entitled *The Making of Abbotsford*, and in her recent brief book on *Jeanne d'Arc*. One of her sons has done honour to the houses of Maxwell and Scott by his distinguished services in the war in South Africa. Thus the long descended name of the great cadet of Harden has not vanished from the Border.

Conclusion

THE character of Scott, and his place in literature, do not demand much discussion after all that has already been said. He was born to be at once a dweller in the realm of dreams, these dreams being mainly "retrocognitive" of the historic past; and a man of action and of this world; while he had a superabundance of joyous vitality, which overflowed into humorous rhyme, even in his worst hours of cerebral disease, and which inspired at once the central error of his life and the resolute sacrifice of life to honour. These elements of character were, all of them, carried to a pitch unusually high, while their combination, and their union with the most kindly nature, are unprecedented. This vitality, and this unfailing and universal sympathy, made friends for Scott of all sentient creatures, from men, women and

children of every rank, to the pig which joined the pack of many dogs and one cat, old Hinse, that scoured the woods with him, and to the strangely sentimental hen which attached itself to Sir Walter. From George IV.—who admired and never turned on Scott—to the hedgers and ditchers on Abbotsford, Scott was endeared to all; in his ruin his old servants refused to leave him, and the music master of his daughters offered him the entire savings of his life. Yet there was no mawkish good nature in Scott; when he bent the heavy arches of his brows the Ettrick Shepherd himself felt that he must "gang warily." No man was served as he was by his household, and when he told his son that certain conduct would entail his highest displeasure, the young man knew the full meaning of the phrase.

Scott's courtesy was spontaneous and universal—he spoke to all "as if he was their blood relation"—except when he deliberately meant to be discourteous, in one case, to Lord Holland, who had done no more than his duty. He had come athwart the interests of Scott's brother Thomas, and Scott took up the feud

in the ancient spirit of clanship. Yet he lived to pronounce Lord Holland "the most agreeable man he ever knew. In criticism, in poetry, he beats those whose whole study they have been." Thus Scott must have expiated an error produced by political heat as well as by personal resentment; probably, like the Baron Bradwardine, he sent "Letters of Slains," or other atonement. Jeffrey says that "this was the only example of rudeness in Scott that he ever witnessed in the course of a lifelong familiarity." In this lonely case, the person "cut like an old pen" was a man of title and distinction.

It is hardly worth while to controvert the opinion that Scott was a snob. In addressing persons of rank, however familiarly intimate he might be with them, he used their "honour-giving names," as Agamemnon bids Menelaus do towards the princes of the Achaeans. This was the customary rule of the period. Byron was indignant when Leigh Hunt publicly addressed him as "My dear Byron," and Byron was an extreme Liberal, while Scott was a Tory. He paid the then recognized

dues to rank; such dues are no longer welcome to their recipients. He lived much with people of the highest social position, but he could and did entertain them at the same table with the Ettrick Shepherd, and with guests known to him of old when a schoolboy or as a lawyer's apprentice. He was observed to pay great deference to a gentleman without any apparent distinction, because he descended from a knight who fought by the side of Wallace.

In all this his conduct, as in everything else, was dictated by his reverence for the past. That reverence for things old, for what had once been, ideally at least, an ordered system of society, was the cause of Scott's Toryism, increased by his patriotism during the struggle with Bonaparte. The ideas and sympathies which made him a Tory, made him also an opponent of the system which turned the Highlands into sheep farms and deer forests, by the expulsion of the clansmen. His opinions on this head are expressed in the Introduction to *The Legend of Montrose*. Again, the feudal ideas at the root of his

Toryism made him the most attentive of all landlords to the wellbeing of every soul on his estates. In bad times he found the wisest and most economic way of providing them with employment at once honourable and remunerative, and he taught the Duke of Buccleuch to follow his example on a great scale. He felt pain and embarrassment in face of the gratitude of his poor cotters for a holiday feast and holiday presents : why, he asked himself, should he have more than they ? His house was as a great hearth whence radiated light and comfort on the humblest within his radius. Before Mr. Ruskin he endeavoured to bring the happiness of art into the region of the crafts.

" The most of the articles from London were only models for the use of two or three neat-handed carpenters whom he had discovered in the villages near him ; and he watched and directed their operations as carefully as a George Bullock could have done ; and the results were such as even Bullock might have admired. The great table in the library, for example (a most complex and

beautiful one), was done entirely in the room where it now stands, by Joseph Shillinglaw of Darnick—the Sheriff planning and studying every turn as zealously as ever an old lady pondered the development of an embroidered cushion. The hangings and curtains, too, were chiefly the work of a little hunchbacked tailor, by name *William* Goodfellow (save at Abbotsford, where he answered to *Robin*), who occupied a cottage on Scott's farm of the Broomielees; one of the race who creep from homestead to homestead, welcomed wherever they appear by housewife and handmaiden, the great gossips and newsmen of the parish—in Scottish nomenclature *cardooers*. Proudly and earnestly did all these vassals toil in his service; and I think it was one of them that, when some stranger asked a question about his personal demeanour, answered in these simple words, "Sir Walter speaks to every man as if they were blood relations." Not long after he had completed his work at Abbotsford little Goodfellow fell sick, and as his cabin was near Chiefswood, I had many opportunities of observing the Sheriff's kind

attention to him in his affliction. I can never forget the evening on which the poor tailor died. When Scott entered the hovel he found everything silent, and inferred from the looks of the good women in attendance that their patient had fallen asleep, and that they feared his sleep was the final one. He murmured some syllables of kind regret; at the sound of his voice the dying tailor unclosed his eyes, and eagerly and wistfully sat up, clasping his hands with an expression of rapturous gratefulness and devotion that, in the midst of deformity, disease, pain, and wretchedness, was at once beautiful and sublime. He cried with a loud voice, 'The Lord bless and reward you,' and expired with the effort."

Of Scott's great charity, which lay in giving affection as well as material aid, examples have been displayed in his latest years. His charity did but begin with these gifts; he was brotherly in all human intercourse. The slightest notoriety brings bores around a man: letter-writing bores, bores who want information accessible in any encyclopaedia; bores who

give voluminous undesired information; bores who ask advice, bores who solicit an interview —countless are the tribes of these thieves of time. At the celebrity of Scott they all flew, like sea-fowls against a beacon above the midnight sea, and he "with a frolic welcome took" their attentions. They "bestowed all their tediousness on him," and he accepted it, suffering them gladly. He answered their ceaseless letters (as from a boy asking him to contribute to *The Giggleswick School Magazine!*), he replied to them with thought, care, and courtesy; he considered their worthless manuscripts, paying £10 in postage for two MSS. of *The Cherokee Lovers: A Tragedy*, by a young American lady. "I might at least have asked him to dinner," he murmured, when a bore of the first head had at last taken his leave. This is indeed charity which endures all things, making itself subject to the needs of all men.

Sir Walter had everything of the saint except (what is indispensable) the psychology of the saint. He was naturally good, born to be so. "Are all Tories born bad?" said a

little boy of a Whig family. "They are born bad, and they make themselves worse," replied his lady mother. Scott was born good, and, by controlling his natural temper, and by reflection, he made himself better. But, though sincerely religious and, we know, a prayerful man, he was no saint, but a man of this world. He was not haunted, as a saint must be, by the desire of ideal perfection. It is not certain whether he was to be reckoned of the Presbyterian or Prelatist form of belief. "Bishops, I care not for them," he might have said, like the great Montrose on his dying day. But he did prefer the Liturgy of the Church of England to the "conceived prayers" of the Scottish pulpit, and read the service on Sundays to his family, when far from a kirk at Ashestiel, and to whomsoever of his neighbours cared to come and listen. He was married in an English church; the burial service of that Church was read at his funeral. I am informed that he was at one time an Elder of the Kirk at Duddingstone, which is partly of Norman architecture, but Lockhart says that, in later life, he adhered to the Church of the Cavaliers.

Yet he recognized a great genius in Dr. Chalmers; there was no bigotry in his Episcopal tendencies; as a matter of taste he preferred the Anglican manner of conducting public worship. He was on the best terms with many ministers; the only profession of whose followers he speaks with a certain lack of sympathy was the profession of schoolmastering. In every dominie he believed that there lay "a vein of absurdity," and on one occasion he reproves himself for thinking that he had met an exception to the rule. One of his own schoolmasters once knocked him down, in boyhood, and apologized by saying (as if he had driven into the party in front of him at golf), that he "did not know he could hit so hard." This apology seldom mends matters!

We all have our foibles. That of Scott was the effort to live in an idealized past. He knew the points at which his reason crossed his judgment. The fairest of historians, he would not write a biography of Queen Mary "because his opinion was contrary to his feeling." "She may have been criminal," he

says, in *The Tales of a Grandfather*, telling the story as fairly as may be, within his space. Lockhart observes that he often speaks of George IV (he must mean George III) as "*de jure* King," on the death of the Cardinal Duke of York. "Yet who could have known better than he that whatever rights the exiled males of the Stuart line ever possessed must have remained entire with their female descendants?" Had Scott lived in his father's time, I misdoubt that he would have worn the black cockade, not the white, for, except in his expenditure, he always had a saving grain of commonsense. Scott was a great and strong man as any of his knights, but the nature which gave him strength made him a poet who "lived in fantasy." He tried to make his dreams real, and he forgot realities. Any ideal set before him gave him pleasure; he certainly and confessedly took a stern delight in the ideal of working off his debts with his own hand. His earlier years of grinding task work were not, as such, unhappy. Sir Walter had, in fact, the most fortunate kind of genius—a genius for happiness, which cannot exist with-

out making life more joyous for all within the radius of its influence.

The Scots are, according to old proverbs, a jealous people. The race has no two sons more opposite in their ideals than Walter Scott and John Knox. Yet they had this virtue in common, that neither in the preacher nor the poet does analysis detect a grain of professional jealousy. Scott could, indeed, see the blemishes on the poetry of Southey; nor could the faults of Byron escape him. But in other contemporary poets whom he mentions, he seems to behold nothing but their excellences, which he often exaggerates. If Byron "beat him," as he said, he seems seriously to have believed that the triumph was deserved. This is, surely, unexampled generosity.

"Scott's chivalrous imagination threw a certain air of courteous gallantry into his relations with his daughters. . . . Though there could not be a gentler mother than Lady Scott, . . . on those delicate occasions most interesting to young ladies, they always made their father the first confidant." In his works of imagination, the relation of father and daughter is

always touched with peculiar grace and tenderness. His dressing-room was "a little chapel of the Lares" fitted up with relics of his father and mother. In every relation of life and literature his motto was "*à léal souvenir*"; he kept the pious trust of all things old that were of good report, and handed on the sacred bequest to all who follow him. As to his place in literature, we leave it to the judgment of the world and of the unborn. They "cannot say but he has had the crown."

Tides of criticism come and go; they may leave the fame and name of Walter Scott deserted, like the cairn of a forgotten warrior forsaken by a receding sea, or they may fill the space with the diapason of their waves. We cannot prophesy. But one sound will not cease, if men dead remember, the carol of the lark that sang above Scott's grave at the funeral of the dearest of his daughters. That song of praise for such happiness as—

> sceptred king not laurelled conqueror

can give, has followed "this wondrous potentate" from three generations who have warmed

their hands at the hearth of his genius, who have drunk of his enchanted cup, and eaten of his fairy bread, and been happy through his gift.

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